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Ad maiorem dei gloriam : an examination of Jonathan Edwards' account of God's self-glorification.

Holmes, Stephen Ralph

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Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam

*An Examination of Jonathan Edwards'
Account of God's Self-Glorification.*

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King's College, London

*Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor
of Philosophy*

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Abstract:

Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam: An Examination of Jonathan Edwards' Account of God's Self-Glorification

This work seeks to explore the theological logic and the appropriateness of Edwards' mature statement of God's purposes in creating, arguing the thesis that at a crucial point Edwards fails to let his account be sufficiently informed by Trinitarian logic derived from the gospel story. After the introductory material, the development of that mature statement is considered, through a series of *Miscellanies* entries, before a fuller discussion of *End of Creation*, in which Edwards' final position, that God created the world for His own self-glorification, is expounded. A brief series of comparisons serves to illuminate the distinctive features of Edwards' account (notably its Trinitarian grammar), and to introduce the line of questioning that is adopted. The central chapters of the thesis examine the working out of this position in Edwards' accounts of creation and redemption, indicating in passing how this theme casts light upon his theological concerns, but chiefly examining the adequacy of the basic account. The result of this is to suggest that there is a flaw in the area of perdition, and so Edwards' writings on hell are considered in order to refine the criticism. The thesis concludes that Edwards failed to apply his own Trinitarian grammar of glorification to his account of hell, and so suggests an inconsistency in his theology here. This conclusion is used to explore the study of Edwards as a theologian, and also aspects of the Reformed tradition of theology.

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Acknowledgements:

A particular form of inflation affects the world of advertising, whereby superlatives become devalued in currency - an example that any traveller on London's tube system cannot have missed concerns music compilations; the issuers of 'The Best 60s Album in the World - Ever' should have realised the trouble they were storing up for themselves, and their announcement of 'The Best 60s Album in the World Ever II' was greeted with appropriate hilarity. I mention this only because a similar form of inflation seems to have been active in Ph.D. students' acknowledgements to their supervisors. To merely thank Dr X or Professor Y might today be in danger of suggesting barely-concealed antipathy; to reach for words that express a sense of a happier and more fruitful relationship than most would result in phrases that, to my English ears at least, would sound over-effusive in the extreme. When, therefore, I say that my time and my relationship with Professor Colin Gunton have been very happy, that I greatly value his friendship, and that the manner of his supervision and the quality of his advice have contributed substantially to whatever value may be found in this thesis, I can only ask that the words are not discounted, but taken in their natural sense.

I am also greatly indebted to the Revd Dr John E. Colwell. John was formerly my tutor at Spurgeons College, and first introduced me to the works of Jonathan Edwards. I have been teaching at Spurgeons under John's guidance whilst working on this thesis, and he was kind enough to read sections of the work whilst it was in progress, and to make many useful comments. These facts can only give a partial sense of the value I place upon John's friendship and conversation over the last few years.

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Whilst working on this thesis I have also been a part of a second academic community, at King's College London. The Research Institute in Systematic Theology there, which brings together postgraduate students, staff, and others, has provided constant stimulation through its weekly seminars and occasional conferences, and has resulted in some close friendships. For my last year of working on this thesis, I have been teaching at Kings as well as Spurgeons, and I am grateful to the Department for taking me on. I have learnt much and benefited in many other ways from my colleagues there.

Over the years of this project, I have come to the fixed opinion that almost the sole use of electronic bibliographical aids is to demonstrate the absolute indispensability of good librarians. Mrs Judy Powles, librarian of Spurgeons College, has been invaluable, not just in her professional capacity, but as a friend. Staff at libraries in King's College, the University of London, Cambridge University, the British Library and the Beinecke Library in Yale have been of great help at different times. My time at the Beinecke was also enriched by conversations with, and practical help from, Ken Minkema and Peter Thuesen, the editorial staff of the Yale University Press project to publish Edwards' works.

For the first two years of work on this thesis I was Assistant Pastor of West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church. Heather and I are grateful to that Christian community for their support for us, and I am particularly grateful to my Senior Pastor, the Revd John Maile, whose friendship and help has been invaluable in many ways. We are also grateful to Ashford Baptist Church, and its minister, the Revd Ian Morris, who have welcomed us more recently.

The life of a Ph.D. student can be a lonely one, and the life of a Christian minister more lonely still, in some ways. I am grateful, therefore, to a number of close friends who at times and in different ways have meant more to me than I can adequately say:

Dave and Erica, Chris and Sureka, Mike and Hester, John and Claire, Brian and Sarah, Phil and Claudia, Shirley and Phil, and Brett.

Some time ago, one of those friends said to me that he had recently realised just how much his parents had got right in the inexact art of fulfilling that role, and told them so. I reflected at the time that my own parents had given almost the best imaginable start to their three sons, and continue to support us wonderfully, but, rightly or wrongly, this was not something I could imagine saying to them. I wonder if writing it will do instead? Heather's parents have also supported us in all sorts of ways through the years we have been married – and before then as well.

Finally, I must try to find words to thank Heather, my wife these last six years and, I hope and pray, for many more to come, for her love, understanding and support. It seems somewhat arrogant to borrow Jonathan Edwards' last words, but I can find no others so well suited: thus far at least 'an uncommon union, of such a nature as I trust is spiritual, and so will last forever.'

Prefatory Note: Language, Quotations and Abbreviations

In recent years, the lack of a personal, gender neutral, third person singular pronoun in English has become notorious. The days when Charlotte Bronte could unselfconsciously refer to herself as 'he' in a letter are gone, whether this is to be celebrated or bemoaned. No wholly satisfactory solution to the various questions raised has yet been proposed, and a writer can only make his or her (!) own attempts to use the language as well as possible. In this thesis I have let gender-specific language in passages I am quoting pass without comment: cases where the sense is not obvious are extremely rare, and I see no reason to edit texts to conform to current linguistic practice on this point any more than on the issue of the old forms of the second person singular pronoun. In my own writing I have sought to be non-gender specific, on one occasion trusting the authority of the most recent Oxford dictionary sufficiently to use 'they' as a singular pronoun. This much, I trust, is uncontroversial. The more inflammatory issue concerns pronouns applied to God; here, I have reverted to the traditional practice of capitalising masculine forms. This has the twin advantages of preserving traditional usage whilst alerting those readers who claim to need such alerting to the fact that the referent is not simply another male human person.

A second issue concerns citations from as-yet unpublished manuscripts; Edwards' use (or, rather, non-use) of punctuation in his own notebooks makes his style rather difficult to read, and he regularly uses a set of abbreviations which, whilst never obscuring the sense, are at least aesthetically difficult. When I have quoted from such material, however, I have chosen to perform only minimal editing on the text, regarding accuracy as a higher call than aesthetics in a work of this nature, at least. I have expanded a few regular abbreviations without comment ('X' for Christ, 'G' for God, 'ch' for church, and so on), and have supplied punctuation where I think that the text verges on the incomprehensible without it. I have also omitted any indication of places in the text where words had been crossed out. I do not think there is any point in this thesis where this level of editing is in any danger of determining, or changing,

the meaning of the text, and so I trust these minimal cosmetic procedures will prove acceptable. In the case of the *Miscellanies* entries, I have used Thomas Schafer's typewritten transcriptions, stored in the Beinecke library, without further adjustment, with the exception of a few longer entries of which the editorial team of the Yale edition of Edwards' works were kind enough to give me printed copies of their more-or-less prepared edition. These entries were numbers 1091, 1174, 1219, 1245 and 1352, and I have used the copies given to me without variance. In the case of one or two other manuscripts which I have transcribed myself, I have indicated uncertain readings in footnotes.

Finally, I should note the abbreviations used in this thesis. For primary works, I use *YEn* to refer to volumes of the Yale edition of Edwards' works and *BTn* for volumes of the older Banner of Truth edition. Full details of both editions may be found in the Bibliography. The only secondary works I have used abbreviations for are *C.D.* for Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* and 'Heppe' for the English translation of Heppe's *Reformed Dogmatics*. Again, full details of these works may be found in the Bibliography.

SRH

Chapter 1

Jonathan Edwards, Theologian?

19. *That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which actually happened.*
20. *He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.*
21. *A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.¹*

Jonathan Edwards does not deserve to be called a theologian. That is, if the thesis I shall argue in the pages that follow is carried, and if the critique of the *theologia gloriae* that Luther offered for dispute at Heidelberg is accepted, then this conclusion follows. Of course, Luther's assertion is harsh, almost intolerably so - but it points directly towards what I shall argue is a systematic flaw in the theology of Jonathan Edwards.

A concern for a particular vision of divine self-glorification runs throughout Edwards' theology, and at a crucial point that vision fails to be sufficiently cross-centred, and so becomes a *theologia gloriae*. It would be insufferably proud to claim to have found *the* flaw in Edwards' system, but I offer my particular interpretation of his theology in the hope that it will add to the steadily-growing sum of our knowledge about this great and, I have found, very likeable thinker.

This initial chapter will seek to place both Edwards and my study of him in context by means of an analysis of some of the recent literature on Edwards that will indicate the sources of a series of positions that I shall take as axiomatic throughout the remainder of the study, and also illuminate the range of contexts in which other scholars have placed Edwards. This survey will also serve to remove the question mark from the chapter title, arguing that the most significant result of recent study of Edwards has

¹ Luther, Theses for the *Heidelberg Disputation* found in *Works* (ed. J. Pelikan and H.H. Lehmann) vol.31: *The Career of the Reformer I* Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia, 1957 pp.52-53.

been a strong appreciation that a profoundly theological vision was at the centre of his thought. With this in place, the second chapter will be an exploration of Edwards' understanding of divine self-glorification through the teleology of *End of Creation*, and the notebook entries that show his progress towards that final statement. Three chapters will then explore this theme with reference to creation, redemption and perdition - the last deserving an entire chapter because it is Edwards' understanding of hell that, I shall argue, is not sufficiently informed by the gospel. The final chapter will be an attempt to show some theological consequences of my thesis, both for the interpretation of Edwards and for the wider systematic task.

1.1 Preliminary Survey of Recent Literature

Edwards is, on the evidence of the sheer weight of published studies, the most fascinating figure in pre-revolutionary America. More than this, however: interest in Edwards comes from an almost bewildering variety of directions. A given study may be biographical or historical in scope, exploring 'Edwards the man' or 'Edwards the Puritan'; it may focus on 'Edwards the American' asking how he exemplifies or shapes the nascent society and culture (often in combination with Franklin). Considered as a scholar in his own right, 'Edwards the philosopher' and 'Edwards the theologian' are obvious perspectives, as is 'Edwards the early American writer' - but 'Edwards the rhetorician' and 'Edwards the psychologist' have been essayed, with good reason, and the material is surely available for an interesting study on 'Edwards the scientist'.

In part, of course, this range of interests is merely a historical artefact: it is the present age of overwhelming specialisation that is out of step with the majority of human experience, not the polymathic day in which Edwards lived. But the 'Renaissance' ideal - to seek to be accomplished in several areas of human endeavour - is one thing; to be sufficiently able to excite interest nearly three centuries later in such a variety of fields is another, and a most unusual one.² This range makes the question of the title a

² A comparison with Isaac Newton may perhaps make this point: Newton's greatness in one field is undeniable, but he wrote in other areas (notably theology), works which have long since been consigned to the status of historical curiosities. Even Edwards' scientific juvenilia remain important and of interest for their philosophical content, as I hope to show later in this thesis. Perhaps a

valid one, however, even without Luther's strictures: can Edwards be claimed as a theologian more than a philosopher, a preacher or a religious psychologist? If there is a coherence to the variety of interest his thought has provoked, is it an explicitly theological coherence, or does the centre lie elsewhere? Such questions are a part of the burden of this chapter.

Two scholars who have explicitly commented on the range of approaches to the study have chosen glassy metaphors to explore it. A recent article by Peter Thuesen³ has described Edwards as 'the Great Mirror' in which every interpreter sees him- or herself. Thuesen presses the image of the mirror to ask what it is that makes Edwards' thought so amenable to this sort of re-presentation, and suggests size and subtlety as the characteristics that make a mirror reflective (one may note in passing that Thuesen, unlike Edwards, does not build his metaphor on the best science of his day), so the close-textured, finely organised nature of Edwards' thought, and the sheer volume of the corpus, allow each interpreter to find whatever he or she may be looking for.

Thuesen's image is a suggestive - perhaps even useful - description of the way Edwards has been treated through American intellectual history. The following passage in particular rings true of that story:

...seeing Edwards as a Great Mirror means conceiving of him as an imposing - yet acquiescent - fixture on the cultural landscape. Ever since his death, Edwards has been like an ornate looking glass hanging above the mantle in America's living room. When we turn towards him, he shows us ourselves, but at all other times he hangs passively on the wall, in silent grandeur.⁴

Of course (and Thuesen is well aware of this, although he persists with the, at this point unhelpful, metaphor of the mirror) the image that is seen is not always the image of the observer; often writers have discovered their opposites in Edwards -

comparable figure would be Blaise Pascal, whose mathematical and scientific work is of abiding significance, but who also wrote theology that continues to be read and studied, and is regarded as a very significant figure in French literature.

³ Thuesen, Peter J. 'Jonathan Edwards as Great Mirror' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 50 (1997) pp.39-60.

⁴ *ibid.* pp.43-44.

Harriet Beecher Stowe famously described his theology as 'an instrument of torture',⁵ and even as sympathetic a biographer as Ola Winslow describes Edwards' 'bondage' to an 'outworn dogmatic system' as 'a tragic pity'.⁶ Here Edwards is not so much 'the great mirror' as the United States of America's own version of the Picture of Dorian Gray: by heaping her (supposedly repressive and unpleasant) Puritan heritage on her greatest son, the United States can be untainted by such things - by, that is, theology - and embrace her true heritage as a progressive and Enlightened nation.⁷

Thuesen's article could be read as a challenge to read Edwards more deeply and widely - a grasp of the whole corpus, minutely examined to observe and explore that fine structure, would allow us to examine the composition of the mirror itself, rather than just the reflection we see in it. This does not seem to be his intention, however: he seems to be engaged in a particular form of historical hermeneutics⁸ - asking why Edwards has been read like this, and (by implication) why it is certain that he will continue to be so read. The multiplicity of Edwardses I described at the start of this chapter is inevitable and no more than a testimony to the particular character of his thought. None of them is a 'right' or 'wrong' way of viewing him and, if they tell us anything, it is about the interpreter not about Edwards, who remains no more, and no less, than a mirror. Edwards is not a theologian, he just looks that way to the theologians who read him.

⁵ For this and similar opinions from Mark Twain and Oliver Wendell Holmes see May, Henry F. 'Jonathan Edwards and America' in Hatch, N.O. and Stout, H.S. (eds) *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988 pp.19-33. p.23.

⁶ Winslow, Ola E. *Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758: A Biography* Octagon Books, New York, 1973, pp.326-327.

⁷ Phyllis McGinley's couplets have become almost clichéd as an example of this way of viewing Edwards, although only written in the 1950s:

And if they had been taught aright,
Small children carried bedwards
Would shudder lest they meet that night
The God of Mr. Edwards,

Abraham's God, the Wrathful One,
Intolerant of error -
Not God the Father, or the Son
But God the Holy Terror.

(from 'The Theology of Jonathan Edwards' in *Times Three: Selected Verse from Three Decades with Seventy New Poems* Secker & Warburg, London, 1961)

⁸ 'The juxtaposition of different interpretations of Edwards thus becomes an important interpretive exercise.' *art.cit.* n.15 p.42.

The second glassy metaphor comes from Conrad Cherry, and provides more hope for the student who, in offering an interpretation of Edwards, would like to think that he has more to show than a self-portrait. Cherry's book offers this assertion: 'In a theologian[!] of Edwards' stature, there are a number of fundamental and distinctive motifs operative, and his outlook cannot be reduced to any one of them. Nevertheless, any one of a number of motifs may serve as a window through which we may observe other aspects of his thought.'⁹ To press this metaphor: a structure forms a more-or-less coherent, but certainly connected whole, and windows offer partial views of the whole. In all but the simplest structure, no window will offer a complete picture, and so a description of the whole may only come from combining carefully observed views from different perspectives.

So, for example, Edwards' preaching may be envisioned as one wing of the house. Early American Literature, the Puritan tradition, classical rhetoric and Edwards' own theology are some of the windows - they each offer a different way of looking at this subject, and each must be employed to form a view with any claim to being comprehensive. The variety of approaches to Edwards is testament to the richness of his thought - each approach is valid, although judgement may be made about the relative importance of each, and a particular position, whichever approach it may come from, may be judged more or less adequate on the basis of the evidence available. If Edwards is to be called a theologian, it is because, having viewed him from a variety of angles, this set of concerns rather than any other has been seen to be central.

If this understanding of the variety of approaches that are made to Edwards is correct, then by reason of his greatness the task of expounding 'Edwards' thought' as a whole becomes a major one indeed. It is not my purpose in this thesis to do anything so ambitious, but, concentrating on the explicitly theological, rather than any other area, to offer a particular view of Edwards' theology, a look through a different window which, integrated with earlier studies, will, I hope, prove illuminating. This introductory chapter is intended to put the study in some context, however, firstly by bringing some order to the profusion of studies of Edwards that are available, in order

⁹ Cherry, C. *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* Doubleday, Garden City, 1966 p.7.

to offer a view - albeit limited, personal, and partial - of the current state of scholarship, and secondly by briefly placing Edwards within intellectual and historical contexts which will be important for the arguments that follow.

Two books will serve as useful *termini* for this survey: There is widespread agreement that the single most significant text in sparking the renewal of interest in Edwards that has taken place during this century was Perry Miller's *Jonathan Edwards*,¹⁰ and this will make a useful *terminus a quo*.¹¹ At the point when Miller's study appeared, for some decades Edwards had been remembered as little more than a fiery Puritan preacher, and even within the churches only by groups on the fringes, in intellectual and theological terms at least: traditional Calvinists knew him as a powerful exponent of their position; revivalists knew him as *the* preacher of the Great Awakening; the supporters of the Evangelical missions knew him as Brainerd's biographer.¹² Miller highlighted Edwards' philosophical genius, and the use he had made of Locke and Newton. He also (as one of the most significant historians of colonial America) introduced Edwards as a key figure in interpreting the American culture, whilst down-playing the significance of Edwards' theology - for Miller, Calvinist dogmatics was merely the medium Edwards used to express his art, which could as well (or better) have been expressed in poetry or literature or perhaps even music. Edwards was great precisely because it was not decisive to view him as a theologian.

Not quite forty years later, Robert Jenson's *America's Theologian*¹³ succeeded in weaving together the same threads as well as anyone since Miller, although the tapestry created showed a very different picture. This will serve as my *terminus ad*

¹⁰ Miller, Perry *Jonathan Edwards* William Sloane Associates, *n.loc.*, 1949.

¹¹ I will, of course, make reference to significant studies written before Miller's work, but the field of scholarship is vast enough that some limits must be imposed, and Miller (as I will argue) certainly marked the beginning of a new epoch in the study of Edwards.

¹² It is perhaps instructive to ask how much of the revival of interest in Edwards' thought has been due to the intellectual mainstream recognising that its dismissal of traditional theological orthodoxies and evangelistically-minded Christian practice was too-hasty and unjustified - not to say arrogant.

¹³ Jenson, Robert W. *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988.

quem.¹⁴ For Jenson, Edwards was first and foremost a theologian, albeit a philosophically informed and aware one. The influence of Newton and Locke is still recognised, but their thoughts are made subservient to an overarching theological vision. And it is as a theologian that Edwards speaks to American culture, not as an interpreter, but as a sharp critic. The Arminianism that Edwards devoted himself to combating was the first stirring of America's very own cultural religion, and so Edwards' responses to that Arminianism, and the alternative vision that he expounds, are challenges to the heart of the American nation.

There have been several significant studies of Edwards in the decade or so since Jenson wrote, of course, but nothing that quite brings the various threads together in the same satisfying way and, in my estimation, nothing that is anything like as penetrating in exposition and analysis. So, to try to impose some order on the field of Edwardsean studies, I intend to explore three trajectories - philosophical, cultural and theological - from Miller to Jenson. A fourth section will note some of the more important (for my purposes, at least) of the profusion of minority approaches that will not fit this scheme neatly. I acknowledge freely that the scheme is in some degree artificial; but merely listing texts in order of publication lacks both interest and utility, and so some heuristic scheme must be devised.

Before I begin, one apparently glaring omission in all of the above must be addressed: what of biography? The brief, and slightly depressing, answer is that Edwards is in need of a biographer. Not that there has been any shortage of biographies, but none of the volumes currently available can be regarded as satisfactory. The early biographies of Hopkins and Dwight naturally remain indispensable, but are of course not sufficient.¹⁵ If I may pass over the nineteenth century in a somewhat cavalier manner, the standard modern biography is still Ola Winslow's *Jonathan Edwards*,¹⁶ published nine years before Miller's work, and so unable to take advantage of the intellectual advances made in the last half-century - not just in understanding

¹⁴ Jenson's own preface (pp.vii-ix) shows his awareness of being about the same task as Miller, in distinction from the more specialist studies that had appeared between.

¹⁵ An abridged form of Dwight's biography can be found in *BTI* pp.xi-cxcv; Hopkins is reprinted in Levin, David (ed.) *Jonathan Edwards: A Profile* (American Profiles Series) Hill and Wang, New York, 1969.

¹⁶ *op.cit.*

Edwards' thought, but in our grasp of colonial American life - and such important advances as the patient work that has resulted in accurate dates for Edwards' manuscripts.

There have been a number of book-length biographies of Edwards since Winslow and Miller, but in every case they are unsatisfactory for one reason or another. Some simply lack comprehensiveness or insight. Others add something to our understanding of Edwards, but fail if considered as biographies (Elisabeth Dodds' *Marriage to a Difficult Man* (1971), succeeds more than any of the volumes in giving us a feel for Edwards in all his humanity - perhaps because the book is focused on Sarah, so he is not centre-stage - and is a delightful book. It is not an adequate biography, whether in terms of content or insight, however). Others still are useful studies of limited scope (Holbrook's *Jonathan Edwards: The Valley and Nature*,¹⁷ for example, argues a convincing case for the importance for our understanding of the physical landscape in which Edwards lived). More texts, and more limitations could be mentioned.

Special mention here must go to Iain Murray's *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (1987) which is the most ambitious and most useful of the more recent biographies. It is well written, careful and comprehensive factually, and sympathetic to Edwards. Not unusually for Murray, however (one thinks of his volume on Spurgeon¹⁸) the reader cannot help feeling that the author's apologetic concern for a particular brand of Reformed piety is in constant danger of obscuring the subject.¹⁹ This is, finally, a great shame, as this should have been the biography for which students of Edwards are waiting.

¹⁷ Holbrook, Clyde A. *Jonathan Edwards: The Valley and Nature: An Interpretive Essay* Associated University Presses, London, 1987.

¹⁸ Murray, Iain H. *The Forgotten Spurgeon* Banner of Truth, London, 1973².

¹⁹ To cite merely one example: throughout his book, Murray does not have a positive word to say about Perry Miller's study. Whilst I share the current consensus view that Miller fails badly to understand Edwards' theology, and so finally fails badly to understand Edwards, there remains much of interest and value in his book - not least in the attempt to place Edwards philosophically. Murray is apparently blinded to these strengths because of the seriousness he ascribes to the fault, and so has little or no time for philosophical issues, leading finally to a failure to see what is distinctive about Edwards' version of Calvinism.

So I have not included biography in my scheme, because there is so little to report. Miller's volume claimed to be biographical, but was a discussion of ideas rather than events and personalities; Jenson makes no such claim. A standard biography to replace Winslow is desperately needed, and Edwards students can only hope that even now an able scholar with an eye to the tercentenary in 2003 is at work.

1.2 Recent Philosophical Interpretation of Edwards

Nineteenth century America gave us 'Edwards the philosopher'. His Calvinism, and hence all his theology, was an embarrassment; his sermons so many abhorrent barbarisms, unfit for civilized ears. As Murray says, '[t]hey were certain that if Edwards were to be appreciated at all it must *not* be in terms of his theology... Only as a "philosopher", it seemed, could he retain some respectability.'²⁰ In his biography, Hopkins gave us the memorable image of a thirteen year old boy poring over Locke's *Essay* with 'more Satisfaction and Pleasure in studying it, than the most Greedy miser in gathering up handfuls of Silver and Gold from some new discover'd Treasure.'²¹ - an image which Miller's study could almost be said to be built around - *this*, for Miller, is the defining moment of Edwards' life, not conversion, or the revivals, or the sermon at Enfield in 1741. Edwards' other early biographer, Sereno Dwight, first published 'The Mind', the most purely philosophical of Edwards' notebooks, on which his reputation as a philosopher was largely built. The contents of 'The Mind' led to most nineteenth century studies describing Edwards as an idealist, and to a series of attempts to discover from whence this idealism was derived.

Miller's study, as I have already noted, depicted Edwards as a Lockean, and so an empiricist, rather than an idealist. 'In Edwards,' he claims, "'idealism" is an incidental argument, and except for the act that his mind moved for a few paragraphs along the same path as Berkeley's, a path that was unmistakably laid out by Locke, Edwards and Berkeley have little in common.'²² I will offer my own assessment of the similarities and differences between Edwards and Berkeley in chapter 3 of this thesis; the present point is the impetus Miller gave to the study of Edwards' philosophy. It was no longer sufficient to regard Edwards' philosophy as the juvenile

²⁰ Murray, *op.cit.* p.xx; italics original.

²¹ See YE6 p.17 for the relevant paragraph.

idealism of a genius who unfortunately devoted his mature thought to less profitable subjects; for Miller everything Edwards wrote was determined in its form by these early philosophical commitments, and the need was not to trace the source of these teenage speculations, but to trace their issue, to find that there was philosophical gold in the Calvinistic dross of the mature treatises - or perhaps, that the common stone of Puritan dogmatics had been sculpted into philosophically beautiful forms by Edwards' consummate artistry.

This is not however, Miller's only contribution to the understanding of Edwards' philosophy. As well as making much of Locke, he recognises the significance for Edwards of an early reading of Newton.²³ Anderson, who has edited Edwards' early scientific manuscripts, regards him as 'nearly unique' amongst naturalists in the American colonies in focusing his interest on problems of physics, rather than those of botany or zoology.²⁴ However, Edwards' interest was not in becoming a Newtonian physicist - in a reassuring glimpse of humanity in the genius, he became one of the first of many students who could make neither head nor tail of the differential calculus!²⁵ Edwards' use of Newton, as Miller was the first to recognise, was once again philosophical. Miller offers the example of the collapse of causality: from the Aristotelian profusion of pre-Newtonian physics, Edwards was left with one meaningful cause, the instrumental, and (suggests Miller) one of his most carefully-argued sermons can be read as an attempt to rewrite the doctrine of justification by faith alone within constraints imposed by this reduction.²⁶

Miller's reconstruction of Edwards' philosophical genius is now widely regarded as wrong-headed at almost every turn, but that is not the point. Miller's book is important not because it is right, but because it opened up vistas in Edwards' thought that few had imagined were there.

²² *op.cit.* p.62.

²³ *ibid.* pp.72-74.

²⁴ *YE6* p.39.

²⁵ 'Always, when I have occasion to make use of mathematical proof, to acknowledge my ignorance in mathematics, and only propose it to 'em that are skilled in the science whether or no that is not a mathematical proof' Number 16 of 'Cover-Leaf Memoranda' from the *Natural Philosophy Notebook* - *YE6* p.194.

²⁶ *op.cit.* pp.74-79.

After Miller, many studies have sought to explore these wide open spaces. One or two writers, it is true, refuse to accept Miller's basic contention that the more philosophical early writings and the more theological mature works cannot be separated. James Carse, for example, claims that there is a discontinuity here.²⁷ This opinion may be safely discounted, however.²⁸ Others, without denying Miller's position, continue the earlier quest to trace the sources of, and influences on, Edwards, philosophically. Of particular note here are Norman Fiering's study, focusing particularly on the background in British moral philosophy, and William Sparkes Morris, whose vast thesis is in danger of being too complete to be useful.²⁹ These two studies are certainly useful in tracing connections and influences, and so helping us to understand where Edwards was genuinely novel. The latter, however, is sometimes in danger of assuming a similarity must imply an influence. Edwards, well read as he was, had not read every European philosopher of the previous century, and so was unlikely to have been influenced by them all. Morris' basic argument, that Edwards found a middle way between British empiricism and European idealism, is nonetheless a useful corrective to the either-or position left by Miller's assault on the earlier interpretations. Leon Chai's recent study is probably best included here:³⁰ although he is seeking to use Edwards to explore Enlightenment forms of rationality, rather than tracing influences on him, one of the results is usefully to situate Edwards philosophically. The majority of philosophical studies, however, address the challenge of finding an interpretation that will demonstrate the coherence that runs through the corpus.

²⁷ Carse, James *Jonathan Edwards and the Visibility of God* Scribner's, New York, 1967 pp.34-35.

²⁸ Carse's suggestion is that Edwards gave up philosophy and set out on a new intellectual quest. Quite apart from the anachronism of separating philosophy and theology in this manner, something Edwards would never have conceived of, this argument relies on a now-disproven dating of the *Notes on the Mind* manuscript. Anderson's discussions in *YE6* pp.324-329 demonstrate that Edwards was certainly using the *Mind* entries in preparing even his last works, the *Two Dissertations*, and also that he was adding to it as late as 1756-1757 (this last from a quotation from Cudworth's *Intellectual System*, which Edwards had not read until around this date - see *YE6* p.329).

²⁹ Fiering, Norman *Jonathan Edwards' Moral Thought and its British Context* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1981. Morris, W.S. *The Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* Carlson, Brooklyn, 1991 (this is an unrevised posthumous publication of a thesis completed in 1955).

³⁰ Chai, Leon *Jonathan Edwards and the Limits of Enlightenment Philosophy* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998.

A recurrent theme has been aesthetics, with book-length studies by Roland Delattre and Terence Erdt being the most sustained contributions.³¹ Delattre's careful work in establishing the key aesthetic categories and their relationships in Edwards' writings is as useful as it is impressive, and Erdt applies this theme to a key question in Edwards' psychology of conversion, the precise nature of the 'sense of the heart' of which he regularly speaks. Jenson recognises the significance of this theme and adds his own contribution by pointing out that the beauty Edwards envisions is more nearly the sequential or dynamic beauty of a piece of music than the static beauty of a painting.³² As a result of this work, the centrality of the third of the classical transcendentalists for Edwards has been established, and I will make use of this theme regularly throughout this thesis, but particularly in discussing Edwards' metaphysics in chapter 3. The central point that I will return to is theological - again and again, when asking about reasons for God's actions, Edwards will claim that such and such a course is appropriate for God because, in the light of who God is, it is beautiful.

Aesthetics has importance in every area of Edwards' thought, but particularly perhaps in ethical discussions. This relationship was established and explored by Clyde Holbrook,³³ whose study was also the first of the recent works to trace the distinctions Edwards makes between redeemed and unredeemed virtuous action, a distinction which should now be recognised as key to his ethics. Fiering's study, already mentioned, traces the secularising tendencies in the new field of 'moral philosophy', and suggests that Edwards, clearly schooled in this nascent discipline, devotes himself to attempting to reverse this. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson explored a morality based on Lockean psychology, which (potentially) had no need for divine reward and retribution in its account of motives; Edwards argued vigorously in response that ethics must be theocentric - 'True Virtue' could only exist in a God-directed, Spirit-empowered, Christ-like life. Finally, in this area, Post takes the story forward, in

³¹ Delattre, Roland A. *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* Yale University Press, London, 1968. Erdt, Terence *Jonathan Edwards: Art and the Sense of the Heart* University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1980.

³² Jenson, *op.cit.* pp.194-196.

³³ Holbrook, Clyde A. *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1973.

seeking to trace the influence of Edwards in ethical debate,³⁴ and particularly the source of the notorious suggestion that a saint should be willing to be damned for the love of God. Although this latter attitude cannot be found in Edwards, from the very first pages of Holbrook's study it is clear that his ethics are theocentric, built around the recognition of God as the centre of the universe, and Fiering and Post's studies amply support this contention.

Moving on, Douglas Elwood's significant monograph³⁵ argued that a concept of divine immediacy enabled Edwards to hold together his traditional Calvinism with an almost Neoplatonic panentheism, thus introducing the question of ontology. From a very different direction, if under an identical title, Sang Hyun Lee also considered the issue of ontology,³⁶ arguing that the use of concepts of 'habit' or 'disposition' enabled Edwards to speak meaningfully of unactualised being, and so offering a reading of Edwards' doctrine of creation that does not need to rely on Neoplatonic categories. Such ontological questions will become decisive in my criticisms of Edwards in the latter half of this thesis. Once again, the question reduces to a theological one (as Elwood's focus on divine immediacy and Lee's suggestion that God's being is definitive for creaturely ontology both suggest): God is 'being in general' according to Edwards, so that ontological questions are no more than theological ones phrased in a certain manner.

Lee argues that his account of Edwards' 'dispositional ontology' provides the 'key to the particular character of Edwards' modernity';³⁷ the final theme in my survey of recent philosophical approaches to Edwards could be called the 'postmodern' strand, as a number of scholars have used his writings to advance or explore characteristically postmodern themes. Stephen Daniel's discussion of semiotics assumes and asserts

³⁴ Post, Stephen G. *Christian Love and Self-Denial: An Historical and Normative Study of Jonathan Edwards, Samuel Hopkins, and American Theological Ethics* University Press of America, London, 1987.

³⁵ Elwood, Douglas *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* Columbia University Press, New York, 1960.

³⁶ Lee, Sang Hyun *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988.

³⁷ *ibid.* p.4.

that Edwards is not a modernist thinker,³⁸ and even compares his thought to that of Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva. Wainwright similarly uses Edwards as one of a number of conversation partners in his discussion of the nature of reasoning in an implicit attack on the modernist paradigm.³⁹ Clearly Edwards was not postmodern; the etymology of that title alone should convince us of that. The use of these studies, however, is in highlighting the possibility of a different account of the history of ideas from the Enlightenment myth of progress. Edwards' Calvinism need not be thought of as 'primitive', just as incompatible with the dominant thought-forms of nineteenth century America, and so difficult for people in that culture to cope with. When Jenson suggests that Edwards shows a different way of being American, and so offers a theological challenge to a nation that came to birth after his death, it is this sort of theme he is implicitly drawing on.⁴⁰ What is perhaps missing in these postmodernist interpretations of Edwards is the realisation, central to Jenson, that this is a *theological* critique, that its basis and power come from an assertion of the priority of God.

In order to suggest a way of drawing together this range of approaches to Edwards' philosophy, I have indicated my conviction as I have discussed each approach that any common ground will be theological rather than philosophical. In a recent article, Michael McClymond has argued this point persuasively. He suggests that the theocentric nature of Edwards' thought will establish the connections and he offers indications of how this might work with regard to ontology, epistemology, idealism and aesthetics.⁴¹ Miller had sought to paint Edwards as a philosopher who happened to write his philosophy in the form of Calvinist dogmatics; McClymond shows that

³⁸ Daniel, Stephen H. *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics* (The Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion) Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994. For the particular point see, for example, p.4: 'Edwards's texts assume practices which are simply unimaginable in terms of modernity.'

³⁹ Wainwright, W.J. *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason* Cornell University Press, London, 1995. Chai's book (n.26 *supra*) also should be mentioned here, as pursuing a similar programme.

⁴⁰ *op.cit. passim*, but particularly pp.11-12, 194-196, & the entire section entitled 'Community', pp.139-185.

⁴¹ McClymond, Michael J. 'God the Measure: Towards an Understanding of Jonathan Edwards' Theocentric Metaphysics' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 47 (1994) pp.43-59. This article has been incorporated into Professor McClymond's monograph on Edwards, *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, where it forms ch.2, without substantial alteration. Chapter 4 of the book extends the argument concerning theocentricity to include Edwards' ethics.

only by recognising Edwards as what might be termed a 'radical Calvinist' with an uncompromising assertion of the centrality and sovereignty of God, can his philosophy be understood. With this latter judgement I heartily concur.⁴²

1.3 Edwards and American Culture in Recent Scholarship

Perry Miller appears in this study mainly because of one book on Edwards. His significance, however - and by any standards he was a significant scholar - lies more in his historical work on colonial America.⁴³ His work resulted in a new appreciation of early American history, and an interest in finding the genius of America in those early years. A major motif of this search, a motif which can already be found in Miller's own writings,⁴⁴ has been the polarity between Jonathan Edwards and Benjamin Franklin.⁴⁵

This polarity has taken various forms. Sometimes it is clearly present, but its precise nature is indistinct, as when a recent history of American literature describes Edwards and Franklin as 'two men who between them seem to realize and sum up the changes of American thought and the variety within it'.⁴⁶ Sometimes Edwards is the bugbear, the personification of aristocracy, superstition and intellectual slavery from which the new, young nation was to free itself; and Franklin, as the personification of democracy, of the American dream of earning one's position in society, offers salvation from this bugbear.⁴⁷ In other versions, there is less of a value-judgement implied, as for instance, Jones, following Brooks, who sees a complementarity

⁴² A nice conceit suggests itself in placing yet a third interpretation on the question I have taken for my title in this chapter: the strictest use of the word 'theologian', or at least of its Greek root, was reserved for one who spoke of God as He is in Himself, as opposed to the *oeconomia* - hence Gregory of Nazianzus receives the title as a result of preaching the 'theological orations'. McClymond's great argument, with which I agree, is that in this sense also Edwards is a theologian.

⁴³ See (amongst other works) the two volumes of *The New England Mind* (*The Seventeenth Century* and *From Colony to Province* both Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1954 and 1953); *The Puritans* (with Thomas H. Johnson, revised edition: Harper and Row, New York, 1963) *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1956).

⁴⁴ *Jonathan Edwards* p.xiii.

⁴⁵ For a brief overview of the history of this comparison see the 'Introduction' in Oberg, Barbara B. and Stout, Harry S. (eds) *Benjamin Franklin, Jonathan Edwards, and the Representation of American Culture* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993, pp.3-8.

⁴⁶ Ruland, Richard and Bradbury, Malcolm *From Puritanism to Postmodernity: A History of American Literature* Penguin, London, 1992 p.38.

⁴⁷ So, for example, Vernon L. Parrington *Main Currents in American Thought: An Interpretation of American Literature from the Beginnings to 1920: Vol.I 1620-1800: The Colonial Mind* Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1930. See especially pp.148-178.

between the heirs of Edwards the idealist philosopher in American academic life, and the heirs of Franklin the utilitarian in business life.⁴⁸

Alongside this attempt to use Edwards as an interpretative tool for American culture, there is a parallel (to the extent that the separation is not always recognised) attempt to use Edwards as an interpreter of American culture. For Miller, Edwards reminds the nation that sometimes, beyond the satisfaction and the solace that can be found in a new refrigerator, or a paid-off car (one can imagine Miller arguing, as the consumer boom of the 1950s began), there is something darker, and wilder and more elemental, that must occasionally be faced (the consumer boom, after all, took place in the shadow of the Bomb).⁴⁹ For Jenson, Edwards is America's prophet as much as America's theologian. He sees with inspired clarity the failures and contradictions that will come from the nation's particular idolatries,⁵⁰ and in theological treatise as much as jeremiad, calls the nation - not back, but to a different way of moving forward.⁵¹

Clearly, what is at stake here is as much an interpretation of American culture as an interpretation of Edwards. But in fact the disagreements run deeper than that: as Jenson sees with some clarity, Edwards' vision, inspired by Locke and Newton, is of a different way of being Enlightened than that which the Enlightenment in fact followed, personified so well in Benjamin Franklin.⁵² The Declaration of Independence and the nation that was born from it represent, in a sense, the great

⁴⁸ Jones, Howard Mumford *O Strange New World: American Culture: The Formative Years* Chatto and Windus, London, 1965 pp.197-200. Van Wyck Brooks published a number of works around the turn of the century in the area of what would now be called American Studies, and several are listed in Jones' bibliography. He gives no precise reference to where this idea may be found in Brooks, and I have not been able to trace it.

⁴⁹ Miller describes Edwards as 'an aboriginal and monolithic power ... a reminder that ... there come periods, either through disaster or through self-knowledge, when applied science and Benjamin Franklin's *The Way to Wealth* seem not a sufficient philosophy of national life.' *op.cit.* p.xiii.

⁵⁰ Miller, too, sees Edwards as a commentator on what America was to become: '...though he met the forces of our society in their infancy, when they had not yet enlarged into the complexity we now endure, he called them by their names and pronounced as one foreseeing their tendencies. If the student penetrates behind the technical language, he discovers an intelligence which, as much as Emerson's, Melville's, or Mark Twain's, is both an index of American society and a comment upon it.' (*ibid.* p.13)

⁵¹ This theme runs throughout Jenson's book, but is particularly noticeable in the first chapter (pp.3-12) and in the section entitled 'Community' pp.139-185.

⁵² Again, the point can be found *passim*, but see particularly the closing comments on pp.194-196.

Enlightenment social experiment.⁵³ Edwards was out of step with that experiment, a representative of a different possible Enlightenment and a different possible America, and interpretations of his place in the history of American culture will depend in large part upon evaluations of that experiment.

Prior to Miller's study, there seems to have been substantial agreement that Edwards was to be considered as anachronistic even in his own day: Puritan, even medieval, a representative of an old order that was even then passing and has now long passed.⁵⁴ Miller, in seeking to paint Edwards as a Lockean philosopher, argues for a thoroughly Enlightened Edwards, so modern, in fact, that in some ways we are only just catching up with him.⁵⁵ In either case, there is a shared premise: that of human progress. On the one hand, Edwards, however brilliant, is left behind by the march of progress. On the other, his brilliance is shown by the way that he steals a march on progress. Either way, the assumption is that there is a general forward movement in human history, that every century, if not every day, in every way, we are getting better and better.

Perhaps beginning with Auschwitz, or perhaps much earlier, this attitude has been seriously damaged this century. In his recent Drew Lecture, Richard Bauckham has argued that we are witnessing 'the end of secular eschatology'⁵⁶ – the final failure of the forward-looking optimism that has characterised post-Enlightenment Western societies. This is not to say that the 'myth of progress' is dead – studies making all the same assumptions are still regularly published⁵⁷ – but it is to say that this attitude should no longer be assumed, that it, too, is open to question, that, perhaps, the next

⁵³ Or one of the two great Enlightenment social experiments, but the other, beginning with the French Revolution, has a much more messy history, being entangled in European wars from the beginning and often since.

⁵⁴ Parrington (*cit.*) will again serve as an example of this attitude.

⁵⁵ '...he speaks from an insight into science and psychology so much ahead of his time that our own can hardly be said to have caught up with him.' *op. cit.* p.xiii.

⁵⁶ The title of the Drew Lecture, 1998. As-yet unpublished, but the text is held by the library of Spurgeon's College.

⁵⁷ An attractive illustration may be found in A. Owen Aldridge's paper in the volume edited by Oberg and Stout (*cit.*), 'Enlightenment and Awakening in Edwards and Franklin' (pp.27-41). The whole paper demonstrates this attitude, but it is encapsulated in a pair of literary comparisons – Edwards with Shakespeare, Bard of an old world and an older age, and Franklin with Pope, a contemporary author who became the chief hymnographer of the anglophone Enlightenment. Again, Elizabeth Dunn's paper in the same volume, "A Wall Between Them Up to Heaven" (pp.58-74) contains a long endnote categorising commentators according to whether they describe Edwards as 'modern', 'premodern' or some mixture of the two.

great intellectual step forward will be to realise that great intellectual steps go in directions other than simply forward.

If the Enlightenment was not the historically necessary next step from Newton and Locke, if the Declaration of Independence was not fated – or ‘self-evident’ – but merely one possible movement, then Edwards’ relationship to American culture is capable of a multiplicity of interpretations. The options are no longer restricted to a series of points on a (temporal) linear scale – anachronistic, prophetic, or some ambiguous mixture of the two. A two-dimensional map is now available, and Edwards (and Franklin) might be pointing down different roads from the one the Founding Fathers walked, might even have been farsighted enough to see some of the difficulties on that road, and other paths that were clearer. This is certainly, as I have indicated, the opinion of Professor Jenson.

My interest in this thesis is not particularly in Edwards as an interpreter of America – that, surely, is a theme for Americans – and I claim no specialist knowledge of Franklin. But the history of scholarship from Miller to Jenson, and beyond, in this area represents an opening up of possibilities for discussing Edwards in terms of the Enlightenment and modernity. My consideration of the philosophical strand of the literature ended with notice of scholars for whom Edwards pre-empted postmodern criticisms, and what a theologian may take with some gratitude from the field of American studies is that Edwards need not be judged by modern categories, but may, in some senses, stand himself as a judge of modernity. And, echoing the conclusion of the previous section, what a theologian may perhaps offer to this other field is the suggestion that it is explicitly theological analysis, a thoroughgoing criticism based on the gospel, rather than any independent insight, that enables Edwards to speak so penetratingly and so searingly to his nation.

1.4 Recent Theological Interpretations of Edwards

Miller’s attempted rehabilitation of Edwards proceeded in spite of Edwards’ theology. At one point he quotes Holmes as saying that ‘Edwards’ system seems, in the light of to-day, to the last degree barbaric, mechanical, materialistic, pessimistic,’ and Miller

heartily concurs: 'No civilized man in our day, any more than in Dr. Holmes', can say otherwise if he dwells only on the doctrinal positions.'⁵⁸ This is presumably a calculated rebuke to the Princeton theologians who had until a decade or two before Miller wrote held Edwards' name in high honour precisely as a theologian.

This is, in many respects, a continuation of the early nineteenth century evaluation of Edwards. On the one hand, defenders of a version of Christian orthodoxy saw him as the head and founder of their school; on the other novelists and philosophers recognised a man of genius but found his ideas abhorrent and (once again) remnants of an older world that had, thankfully, passed. The theme is becoming recurrent: Edwards was out of step with an Enlightenment liberalism that has been the most intolerant of all intellectual systems, regarding any other way of thought not as a rival to be argued against, but as an anachronism to be dismissed or patronised.⁵⁹

But the response too is becoming recurrent, and this we owe to Miller. Edwards was not an anachronism, a backwoods preacher a century behind the times. He grasped the implications of Locke and Newton decades before almost anyone else on the American continent. Miller, however, sees Edwards as modern - 'he speaks with an insight into science and 'psychology so much ahead of his time that our own can hardly be said to have caught up with him' - despite his theology - 'he speaks from a primitive religious conception which often seems hopelessly out of touch with even his own day'.⁶⁰ Miller is still a child of the Enlightenment, and tries to make Edwards one too. Perhaps, half a century after Miller wrote, our own day has finally caught up with Edwards: there are other answers, other ways forward, where the doubts of Hume lack force and so Kant's erection of a noumenal barrier is no longer necessary; where the imposing systems of thought based on 'self-evident' truths can be deconstructed and exposed as power games, as deceitful operations of self-love, in Edwards' terms. But where Edwards differs from the thinkers moving in the same

⁵⁸ *op.cit.* p.328.

⁵⁹ The continuance of this attitude is evident today in (even the most serious) media commentary. So often Islamic attitudes, for example, are treated as unintelligible objects of wonderment or amusement, rather than engaged with the respect they deserve. To add a personal example, I recall a situation from my student days, in which I was told, with no hint of irony, 'You can't say that - we're tolerant here.'

⁶⁰ *op.cit.* p.xiii.

directions two centuries later is in his recognition that all this can, indeed must, be done theologically.

Probably the most significant single text in the decades after Miller in this area was Conrad Cherry's *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*.⁶¹ Cherry patiently and carefully unravels Edwards' thought from the perspective of his understanding of faith, but this particular focus is less significant than the general claim: 'for good or for ill, Edwards was a Calvinist theologian'.⁶² An intellectually respectable Calvinist theologian was something novel; and a series of studies of greater or lesser length followed, examining Edwards' theology.

Amongst the diversity of published work, two themes may be picked out with relative ease. Firstly, the most well-covered area has been conversion, particularly the nature of the 'new sense of the heart' about which Edwards talked so frequently.⁶³ This theme has been seen to link together Lockean psychological positions and Puritan questions about the nature and morphology of conversion, and so offers fertile ground for an exploration of the theological use to which Edwards put his philosophical positions.

Secondly, a steady stream of works interpreting Edwards from within a traditional Calvinist position have appeared. The best of these (amongst which Cherry may be counted) illuminate the study of Edwards by placing him within another intellectual context: Puritan and Orthodox Reformed theology.⁶⁴ Others suffer from a too-obvious apologetic intent: authors who lack knowledge of, or interest in, Edwards' philosophical commitments⁶⁵ expound his thought in classic Reformed categories in order to reclaim him for a particular theological school and so finally offer a system

⁶¹ *op.cit.*

⁶² p.3.

⁶³ Book length studies focusing here include Simonson, Harold P. *Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of the Heart* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974 and Erdt, *op.cit.* Cherry and Wainwright's volumes (*cit.*) both devote considerable attention to the topic. A significant number of articles and papers have also been published, some of which may be found referenced in my bibliography.

⁶⁴ In addition to Cherry, Paul Helm's insightful introduction to Edwards' *Treatise on Grace and Other Writings* James Clarke, Cambridge, 1971 may be included in this category.

⁶⁵ I suspect, but make no attempt to demonstrate here, that a version of the Scottish 'Common Sense Realism' is retained as a part of commitment to these particular theological schools, and so Edwards is

that differs little from that of (say) Warfield and lacks penetration into the distinctive elements of Edwards' thought.⁶⁶

I will regularly suggest throughout this study that Edwards has not yet been sufficiently well placed within the Reformed tradition of theology. I will also, however, claim that he is creatively within this tradition: his is a distinctively Enlightened Puritanism, a Calvinism that has found (particularly in the doctrine of the Trinity) ways to reshape its own distinctives so that they can stand without apology in an intellectual climate shaped by the heirs of Locke and Newton. This is necessarily a different orthodoxy (but orthodox nonetheless) from that Edwards would have learnt from van Mastricht and Turretin; it is also a different system from that developed by the Edwardsean tradition that followed him, precisely because this clear-sighted appreciation of the significance of Locke and Newton was lacking in that tradition.⁶⁷

Beyond this, a number of writers have fruitfully treated different areas of Edwards' theology; as my thesis is primarily theological I will address these individually at the most appropriate point in my own discussion.⁶⁸ Jenson's book is a powerful summary of Edwards' theology, recognising (for perhaps the first time) the theological use he made of Newton, alongside Locke, and covering almost every topic in some depth. A very recent volume by Michael McClymond⁶⁹ also attempts a survey of Edwards' theology. It is constantly insightful, but does not cohere so well as a whole, and is of narrower compass than Jenson's work.

read as if he operated using such a philosophy. One may say many things of Edwards' philosophical commitments, but that they were determined by 'common sense' is not one of them!

⁶⁶ The best of these works is John H. Gerstner's three volume *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* Berea Publications, Powhatan VA, 1991-1993. Gerstner organises Edwards' thoughts in a meticulous and extremely helpful manner, but rarely offers commentary that is at all incisive, and at times is guilty of simple anachronism. No matter how dear the position may have been to Dr Gerstner's heart, Edwards was not a Biblical inerrantist, and indeed, provides precisely the theological positions required to avoid the total capitulation to Enlightened values that the doctrine of inerrancy represents. Murray's biographical volume (*cit.*), as earlier noted, is open to a similar set of criticisms.

⁶⁷ Joseph Haroutunian's fine book *Piety vs Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* Harper & Row, New York, 1970, first published in 1930, shows great insight into both the greatness of Edwards' theology, and what was lost in the tradition that came after him.

⁶⁸ Probably the most significant current work is the series of introductions to the Yale Edition of Edwards' *Works*. I will be interacting with most of these throughout this thesis, and shall seek to give each its deserved praise in turn, but the series editors deserve great praise for the consistently high standard achieved. There is not yet a single volume for which a close reading of the Introduction will not be of great value to any scholar.

1.5 Other Currents in the Study of Edwards

Although most writers since Miller have sought a theological corrective to his picture, the attempt to demythologise Edwards' religious writings to find a modern psychology has continued - or perhaps re-surfaced from time to time.⁷⁰ Within the same scientific field, a better interpretative practice, recognising Edwards' theological commitments, nevertheless finds something worthy of study in the early scientific writings.⁷¹

Moving from scientific approaches to literary ones, Edwards has long been a standard example of early American literature, with 'Sinners in the Hands of an angry God' vastly over-anthologised, and the 'Apostrophe' to Sarah Pierrepont also frequently noticed. The over-exposure of this one sermon is reflected in recent secondary literature, with a steady trickle of articles analysing it.⁷² In a slightly more specialised area, Wilson Kimanch has ploughed what seems to have been a lonely furrow, but one producing a great harvest, in his decades of rhetorical and literary studies into Edwards' sermons.⁷³

This list could be multiplied, but one final, and idiosyncratic, entry will complete it: building, I suppose, on the 'Apostrophe', and Edwards' last recorded words,⁷⁴ there has been a small tradition of writing the history of Jonathan and Sarah Edwards as a love story. Mrs. Dodds' delightful book⁷⁵ is the first sustained treatment that I am aware of, but it was followed by a chapter in a volume on ethics by James

⁶⁹ *Encounters with God, cit.*

⁷⁰ A paper by David R. Williams, comparing Edwards with B.F. Skinner, would be one example. 'Horses, Pigeons and the Therapy of Conversion: A Psychological Reading of Jonathan Edwards's Theology' *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981) pp.337-352.

⁷¹ This area is decisively affected by the recent re-dating of Edwards' manuscripts, and so the few pages of Anderson's 'Introduction' to *YE6* under the heading 'Edwards as a Scientist' (pp.37-52) are the best available comment, although Anderson refers to a number of earlier discussions in his footnotes. This is perhaps an area where some historical work could profitably be done.

⁷² For example, Steele, Thomas J. and Delay, Eugene R. 'Vertigo in History: The Threatening Taciturnity of "Sinners in the Hands"' *Early American Literature* 18 (1983) pp.242-256.

⁷³ Various essays in collections may be found, but the crowning glory is the massive (258pp.) 'Introduction' to the first volume of Edwards' collected sermons, *YE10*.

⁷⁴ 'Give my kindest love to my dear Wife, and tell her that the uncommon union which has so long subsisted between us has been of such a nature as I trust is spiritual and will therefore continue forever.'

⁷⁵ *cit.*

McClendon.⁷⁶ The attraction of this is, amongst a literature that can be arid in the extreme, as McClendon puts it ‘at [the story’s] center glows a love that was truly gracious and truly human, too ... earthy, human love.’⁷⁷ The famous portrait (attributed to Joseph Badger) of Edwards shows the Puritan theologian in gown, bands and wig – but there is just a hint of a smile at the corners of the mouth, easy to miss, but there – a suggestion of humour and humanity lying beneath the surface, but ready to break out.⁷⁸

The ideal of the Enlightenment philosopher was perhaps most closely approximated in Immanuel Kant, the sage of Königsberg who was unaffected by the world around and left it alone as well, his only appearance his daily walks regular enough to set a clock by. Edwards was not an Enlightenment philosopher. He was a Puritan theologian, and theologians of an Incarnational religion cannot be aloof and separate from the world, but must be full of both humour and humanity to fulfil their calling. Contrary to popular repute, Puritan theologians knew this better than most, and Edwards most certainly did. His private letters have now been published,⁷⁹ and give us some glimpse of this, but for me at least, it was the love story that moved me from admiring the theology to beginning to love the theologian, so that in the preceding paragraphs the love story gets far more space in this thesis than, on strictly intellectual terms, it deserves.⁸⁰

Jonathan Edwards was a Reformed preacher and theologian. His undoubted greatness as a writer, a philosopher, even his early promise as a scientist, should not be allowed to obscure this truth. This is what the four decades of scholarly endeavour between Miller and Jenson demonstrate. The greatness and continuing significance of Miller’s

⁷⁶ McClendon, James W. *Systematic Theology: volume I: Ethics* Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1986 pp.110-131.

⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.131.

⁷⁸ Thuesen makes a similar point about this portrait. *art.cit.*

⁷⁹ *YE16.*

⁸⁰ As with any thinker personal circumstances no doubt affect Edwards’ theology in all sorts of ways. To offer merely one example, he constantly returns to the ‘wedding of the Lamb’ imagery in talking about the final destiny of the Church. It could not be demonstrated, but is surely not unreasonable to

work is that it demonstrated that Edwards had something to say to America.⁸¹ Building on what had come between, and adding much of value of his own, Jenson is able to insist that what Edwards had to say was explicitly and irreducibly theological. It might not - should not - be 'Sinners...' but if we are to hear Edwards' voice it will be a sermon.

I began this introductory chapter by suggesting that the question mark in its title could be justified on two possible grounds. One has been relatively easily disposed of, by an appeal to the literature; it is to the other, the suggestion that in an important area of his theology, Edwards works with a theology of glory, rather than a theology of the cross, and so, according to the strictness of Luther, does not deserve the title 'theologian', that I will turn in the rest of this thesis. The next chapter will prepare the ground by suggesting the centrality of a particular vision of God's glory for Edwards. It will begin, however, with a scene from a detective novel.

suppose, that his predilection for this particular image was in part a result of his own happy experience of marriage.

⁸¹ Being English, however, I would want to insist not just to America, not least because the history of my own, British Baptist, denomination was decisively affected by Edwards' writings – a story that I shall tell in the conclusion to this thesis. A preliminary observation will make the point, however: one of the most striking pieces in the Edwards archive at the Beinecke Library in Yale is a single sheet filed under the title 'Notes on Imputation and Free Grace' (Beinecke collection Box 19 Folder 1232). This is a large sheet, of about A3 size, containing a proclamation from the Governor of a day of thanksgiving on the 7th November 1734, which Edwards has used to make notes. The back is covered, as might be expected, but the front also has boxes drawn and filled with comments wherever there is blank space and, in one or two instances, where there is not. No doubt a certain sort of reader, coming across this sheet, would feel that scribbling all over the royal crest and the legend 'God Save the King' is entirely appropriate, but considered merely as an artefact this sheet is a revealing testimony to both the scarcity and price of paper, and to the British culture that was still strong in the colonies.

Chapter 2

An Increasing Vision of Glory: Edwards' Quest for God's Fundamental Purpose

[Lord Peter Wimsey and Chief Inspector Parker are following a mysterious trail of footprints...]

'It's all right - I've got him. He's tripped over a root.'

'Serve him glad,' said Lord Peter viciously, straightening his back. 'I say, I don't think the human frame is very thoughtfully constructed for this sleuth-hound business. If one could go on all-fours, or had eyes in one's knees, it would be a lot more practical.'

'There are many difficulties inherent in a teleological view of creation,' said Parker placidly.¹

There are only occasional hints in the various novels in which he features of Miss Sayers' intention to grace Chief Inspector Parker with an interest in systematic theology, specifically of an Evangelical flavour, but we may speculate that it was from an Edwardsean that he learnt this final truth, and this comment, albeit ripped cruelly from its context, will serve admirably as a motto for this chapter, and indeed, this thesis. A teleological view of creation, asserting that a fundamental reason could be given for God's decision that there should be something other than an eternity of His own perfection, was a commonplace amongst the Reformed orthodox² theologians of the seventeenth century from whom Jonathan Edwards learnt much of his theology.

The answer given by these writers to the question of the ultimate purpose of creation was very simple: God creates for the promotion and display of His own glory. This often stood as a simple assertion that was neither argued for nor discussed.³ Edwards,

¹ Dorothy L. Sayers *Clouds of Witness* Hodder & Stoughton New English Library, 1988 p.58.

² The theological movement that sought to defend and define the new Protestant positions is variously described as 'Protestant scholasticism' and 'Protestant orthodoxy', with the words 'Lutheran' or 'Reformed' replacing 'Protestant' when more precision is required. Whilst neither of these terms are especially helpful, they have the merit of long use, and I will be adopting the latter.

³ For example: '...he has determined to show forth the glory of his power, wisdom, and goodness in the creation and preservation of all things.' Wollebius IV.1.2 (Beardslee's translation - *Reformed Dogmatics* p.50); 'He has by an unchangeable counsel and purpose specified and resolved on the things

by contrast, but like the good Chief Inspector, saw the many difficulties inherent in such a view, and wrestled with these problems throughout his life. This process of reflection can be seen in the *Miscellanies* - perhaps most conveniently in Harvey Townsend's collected chapter of many of the references, at least until Thomas Schafer's definitive edition for Yale is complete.⁴ The results can be seen in the first of the posthumously published *Two Dissertations*, the *Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*, or *End of Creation* as it is usually now known.⁵

Edwards' discussion begins by assuming the answer assumed by the orthodox, and ends by exploring it, but between he veered away from this position to explore others, which contributed greatly to his understanding of what it meant to say that God's purpose in creating was the display and promotion of His own glory. This chapter will be taken up with an exposition and critique of this position. To address this question, I will begin with a brief account of the Christian doctrine of creation, which will both clarify the question and set limits on the possible answers. I will then explore Edwards' various discussions, before addressing at some length the concept that lies at the heart of his final answer. This will set the scene for the rest of this thesis, as the application he makes of this answer to various areas of theology will be explored with a view to testing the adequacy of his account.

2.1 The Doctrinal Background

The place to begin, perhaps, is in reflection on the question, rather than the various proposed answers. Why, asks Edwards, and the orthodox before him, did God create the world? He is not, in asking this question, making an implicit statement about the

that were to come into being outwith Himself in time, together with their causes, operations and circumstances and the manner in which they are bound to be made and to exist, for proof of His glory.' (Heidegger V.4; q. Heppel p.137); Examples could be multiplied, but see especially Barth, *C.D.* II/2 pp.128-129, where Barth identifies a primal divine decision to display glory as fundamental to both supralapsarian and infralapsarian schemes, and *C.D.* II/1 p.643 where the definition of the *gloria Dei* is 'the self-revealing sum of all divine perfections, ...the emerging, self-expressing, and self-manifesting reality of all that God is...' - and this definition is followed by the assertion 'Many of the older theologians understood the *gloria Dei* in this way.' Also, Balthasar, Hans Urs von *The Glory of the Lord: a Theological Aesthetics* vol.VI: *The Old Covenant* pp.25-26 & n.11 (p.26), where Balthasar discusses, albeit briefly, the medieval scholastic heritage which informed Reformed discussions.

⁴ Townsend, Harvey G. (ed.) *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards from his Private Notebooks* University of Oregon Monographs Studies in Philosophy no.2, University of Oregon, Eugene, 1955 pp.126-153. Schafer's first volume, covering *Miscellanies* a-500, is YE13.

ordering of the works of creation and redemption in the Divine plan, for he is certainly numbered amongst those who would insist that God's prior purpose is to redeem.⁶ Edwards' question is rather why God should do anything at all: He is entirely sufficient in Himself, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, perfect in His own Triune life, so what purpose is served for Him in bringing into being the legions of angels, the expanses of the universe, and the sinful race of human beings?⁷

Any survey of recent works on the doctrine of creation will reveal two things: firstly, that there is near-unanimity on the key contours of the doctrine from early in the Patristic period to the Enlightenment at least, and secondly, that in recent decades this consensus has been under serious attack.⁸ The consensus can be summed up in the key Christian affirmation of *creatio ex nihilo*; the attack concerns the coherence of this idea. For my purposes, the level of agreement up to Edwards' day is helpful, as a general statement of the Christian doctrine will provide all the necessary background.⁹ As regards the more recent attack, this must be put to one side for the purposes of my discussion.¹⁰

⁵ This can be found in *YE8* pp.403-536.

⁶ This will become clear in my discussions of *End of Creation infra*, so one example here should suffice: Edwards describes the crucifixion of Christ as '...as it were the cause of all the decrees, the greatest of all decreed events, and that on which all other decreed events depend as their main foundation.' (*Miscellanies* 762; as yet unpublished, but an (edited) text may be found in *BT2* p.528) The 'decreed events' here certainly include creation. In passing, let me merely highlight that, in contrast to his favoured dogmatics text (that of Turretin), Edwards is numbered on the side of the supralapsarians. That he should adopt this logically rigorous position and seek to answer the question of the justice of the scheme, rather than embracing the infralapsarian attempt to evade the full force of the logic of predestinarian doctrine, is characteristic. His account of these questions will be explored in chapter 4 below.

⁷ This question is heavily nuanced, of course, by the particular account of God's aseity that is adopted, and I will discuss this issue in some detail below.

⁸ See, for example, Gilkey, *Langdon Maker of Heaven and Earth: The Christian Doctrine of Creation in the Light of Modern Knowledge* University Press of America, London, 1959 pp.1-14; Tanner, *Kathryn God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* Blackwell, Oxford, 1988 p.1.

⁹ Although I will be making reference to Turretin, whose work was Edwards' theology text at Yale, in order to demonstrate that these general positions were indeed part of Edwards' specific heritage.

¹⁰ Briefly - and grossly oversimplifying - responses can be characterised as (a) an acceptance of the critique and a revision of the classical doctrine (as, for instance in the various 'process theologies') (b) an attempt to support the classical doctrine by an appeal to natural theology (as in Peacocke, A.R. *Creation and the World of Science* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1979) or (c) an insistence that the only proper response for theology is to assert its own ground and produce doctrines that are coherent on its own terms (so Tanner, *op.cit.*).

Creation, according to Christian theology,¹¹ is wholly given its being by God - it is *ex nihilo*.¹² Its being, however, is genuinely other than God - pantheist and panentheist accounts have always been resisted by the Church¹³ - although it depends for its being on God; aseity and necessary being are divine perfections, not given to creature or Creation. It is this combination of dependency and yet genuine otherness that the statement *creatio ex nihilo* seeks to protect.¹⁴

At this point, my purposes demand that a somewhat artificial division be made between what may be termed the 'how?' and the 'why?' questions concerning creation. The 'how?' question - the account of the relationship between God and His world, between eternity and time - is one I will explore in chapter 3 of this thesis, where I will consider Edwards' idiosyncratic account of creaturely identity and agency. The 'why?' question, to be addressed here, is about - in Edwards' own terms - 'God's chief end in creating the world' - a question about purpose, rather than means.¹⁵ Edwards will not accept any account of any freedom, including God's own freedom, that embraces 'liberty of indifference', or contingent actions, so confronted with the decision to create we may, indeed must, ask why - what is it in God that makes this decision appropriately perfect or beautiful, whereas the converse would have been less so?

As I have indicated, the answer Edwards gives in his mature statement is many-sided but summed up in one word, and that borrowed from the tradition - glory. God's end in creating is the display and the overflow of His own glory. Understanding what it

¹¹ For important recent re-statements of the Christian doctrine of creation, see Barth *C.D.* III/1; Gilkey *op.cit.*; Gunton, Colin E. (ed.) *God and Creation: Essays in Dogmatics, History and Philosophy* T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1997; Gunton, Colin E. *The Triune creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998; Pannenberg, W. *Systematic Theology* vol.2 (tr. G.W. Bromiley) Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1994 pp.1-174.

¹² Turretin V.1.v.

¹³ I will discuss how successfully Edwards' own understanding of the immediacy of God's relationship with Creation preserves this note of genuine otherness in chapter 3 below.

¹⁴ On this, see Jenson, R.W. 'Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation' in Gunton (ed.) *The Doctrine of Creation* (*op.cit.*) pp.17-28.

¹⁵ This division may be regarded as defensible particularly given Edwards' supralapsarianism: the question of God's purposes for the world is clearly separate, and prior, to the question of God's relationship with the world, according to this scheme. John H. Gerstner finds this division in Edwards: 'Jonathan Edwards was surely interested in the creation, but he was far more concerned with what happened behind the creation scene.' *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* vol.2 Berea Publications, Powhatan VA, 1993² p. 189.

means to say this will be the burden of the rest of this chapter, and the rest of this thesis.

As so often in seeking to answer theological questions, there is a dangerously narrow course to be steered here between two dangers: the need is to discover an adequate reason for God to create the universe, without making God's own fulfilment dependent upon the creation. Although there is no discussion of these two dangers in Edwards' works, throughout his discussions he can be seen to be attempting to find this middle course. Without any apparent awareness of the patristic discussions, he does this by the same theological method: invoking the doctrine of the Trinity to explain both God's self-sufficiency and the genuinely other nature of the creation.¹⁶

John of Damascus, following Athanasius,¹⁷ distinguishes between generation, which is an *εργον φυσεως* and creation, which is an *εργον θελησεως*. A similar distinction may be found in scholastic theology between necessary and voluntary acts of will.¹⁸ It is, according to this distinction, of the nature of God to beget the Son (and to spirate the Spirit), because God could not be God without so doing.¹⁹ By contrast, it is

¹⁶ I am indebted to my colleague, Dr. John Colwell, for the suggestion that the development of the doctrine *creatio ex nihilo* only became possible in the context of explicitly Trinitarian discourse. Whilst space precludes a full development of this argument, some pointers may be given: Prof. Young argues that *creatio ex nihilo*, far from being a borrowing from intertestamental Judaism, is first encountered in Tertullian (Young, F. ' "Creatio ex Nihilo": a context for the emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Creation' *S.J.T.* 44 (1991) pp.139-151; see also May, Gerhard *Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of Creation out of Nothing in Early Christian Thought* (tr. A.S. Worrall) T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1994). The co-incidence between the development of adequate statements of both Trinitarian doctrine and the doctrine of creation in patristic thought is clear, particularly in Irenaeus and Tertullian. Again, theological response to Newtonian mechanistic ideas of creation during the Enlightenment was confined to explicitly Trinitarian thinkers - notably Samuel Taylor Coleridge (on this, see Gunton, Colin E. *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, and my own unpublished Master's Dissertation *Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the Knowledge of God* (University of Wales M.Th. 1996)). In chapter 3 below I will be arguing that Edwards' theological appropriation of Locke is saved from the pantheism of Berkeley's similar scheme only because it is Trinitarian in form. The repeated co-incidence of this understanding of creation with Trinitarian ideas is at least suggestive.

¹⁷ According to Barth, *C.D.* I/1 p.434, who references *Ekdosis* I.8 and *Or.c.Ar.* 2:29, but the Athanasius reference seems to be wrong. *Or.c.Ar.* 1:29 contains the relevant ideas, but not the terminology.

¹⁸ See Aquinas *S.T.* Ia q.41 art.2; for the same distinction in the Reformed Orthodox, see Turretin, 3.14; also Turretin 3.29.22, where this is raised specifically in connection with the eternal generation of the Son.

¹⁹ 'He does not have this freedom in respect of His being God. God cannot not be God ... His freedom or aseity in respect of Himself consists in His freedom, not determined by anything but Himself, to be

merely God's good pleasure to create. He could have not done so, and His perfection would not have been altered or lessened in any way.²⁰

The importance of this for the idea of aseity concerns the possibility within a Trinitarian account of God of seeing an inner dynamism to the divine life. If God's perfections must find exercise - as Edwards will argue - then there is a need either for this or for creation. A non-trinitarian account would have, at this point, to make creation necessary to God's *bene esse*, if not His *esse*. This will become clearer as I consider Edwards' struggles with the issue, to which I now turn.

2.2 The Development of Edwards' Position in the Miscellanies

Harvey Townsend, in his collection of the *Miscellanies*, has gathered into one chapter a number of references to God's purpose in creating.²¹ These, together with other entries now published in *YE13*, show an interesting development towards the mature statement in *End of Creation*, which will illuminate certain themes in that mature work. In analysing the latter, then, I intend to start by exploring Edwards' journey to that point.

The journey begins with entries written during Edwards' brief pastorate in New York. In entry *gg*²² (1722-1723), Edwards argues that a universe without immortal intelligent beings would profit God nothing - He 'could neither receive good himself nor communicate good.'²³ This is picked up in *kk*, where it is argued that religion (rather than social morality) must be the chief business of humanity.

God, and this means to be the Father of the Son. A freedom to be able not to be this would be an abrogation of His freedom.' Barth, *C.D.* I/1 p.434. For the same point in Edwards - although not in connection with Trinitarian doctrine - see my discussion of *The Freedom of the Will* in ch.4 below.

²⁰ Controversially, Barth, at least, is not prepared to say the same about the doctrine of election, which, famously, he makes a part of the doctrine of God. see *C.D.* II/2 pp.3-93.

²¹ Townsend, Harvey G. (ed.) *op.cit.* pp.126-153. Most of the entries I cover are in this chapter, although not all. *Miscellanies* entries may also be found in Thomas A. Schafer's volumes in the *YE*; vol.13 covers *a*-500, with a useful introduction; further volumes are eagerly awaited! This, once complete, will be the definitive edition for some time, so I have referenced to Schafer rather than Townsend where possible. All dates are from Schafer.

²² The *Miscellanies* contain two alphabetical series before the main numeric series starts, numbered *a-z* and *aa-zz*. Entry *gg* is, therefore, the thirty-first entry (as *j* and *v* are missing from the first alphabetical series).

²³ *YE13* p.185.

Townsend's series begins with entry *tt* (1722-1723), where Edwards addresses the question of the usefulness of devotion. He argues against the suggestion that an excessive practice of devotion reduces a person's usefulness to the common good of the universe, and so is inappropriate. If, Edwards claims, the common good is the highest good, then the universe as a whole can have no purpose - he invokes the illustration of a clock (later to be used for very different purposes by Paley), and points out that the parts of a clock work together to turn the hands to provide purpose by reference to something outside itself. The lesser creatures exist for the greater, until at last humanity is reached - who can have usefulness and purpose only in reference to the Creator: 'He was undoubtedly made to glorify the Creator, so that devotion must be his highest end.'²⁴ This finds a particularly attractive presentation in entry 3, where 'Happiness is the end of creation ... because creation had as good not be as not rejoice in its being.'²⁵ Again, creation exists to glorify God (this, a position which Edwards will later reach by careful argument, is here simply asserted, presumably as a result of the Reformed heritage already discussed), which is to say creation exists to rejoice at the glory God has displayed.

Up to this point, Edwards has assumed the creation, and asked about its purpose. In *Miscellanies* 87 (Nov.-Dec.1723), the question is raised as to why God should create at all - why He desires to make known His attributes - His 'power, wisdom, etc.' The answer given is that, of all God's attributes, goodness contains within itself the desire for its own display. One may be wise without desiring to display wisdom, one may (indeed, perhaps can only) be just without desiring to display justice - but goodness includes the desire for the opportunity of its own exercise. Therefore God created the world in order to be good to it - i.e. in order to make intelligent beings happy. Happiness is the perception of excellency, so the world is created that angels and humanity may see God's perfections and rejoice in the sight. Entry 92, written at a similar time, is a response to Rev.4:11 'For thy pleasure they are and were created.' How so? asks Edwards, if human (and, presumably, angelic, although he makes little

²⁴ *ibid.* p.190.

²⁵ *ibid.* p.199.

of it) happiness is the end of creation. The answer is simply that God enjoys making others happy.

Thus far, Edwards' theology is heart-warming, but dangerous - a danger he recognises. The above is very close to making God's own happiness dependent on creation. If God is good, and that goodness includes the inclination to exercise itself, to communicate happiness, then God cannot be fully Himself without exercising that desire - without, given what Edwards has offered so far, creating. That is to say, in the language of the distinctions offered earlier, that creation is at this point apparently an *εργον φυσεως*, or a 'necessary act of will'. This danger is addressed in entry 96, where it is argued that perfect goodness desires to communicate perfect happiness, which means happiness equal to the happiness enjoyed by the communicator. Hence God's perfect goodness must find its fulfilment in an 'equal' - this offered as proof of the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁶ In entry 104, Edwards realises that now, according to his earlier accounts, God has no reason to create: 'the Father's begetting of the Son is a complete communication of all his happiness, and so an eternal, adequate and infinite exercise of perfect goodness...'²⁷ The problem is created by Edwards' embracing of Trinitarian doctrine, and it is to that doctrine he turns for an answer: *the* Son also has the desire to communicate Himself, to be good to another - and this other is the Church, which is said to be the completeness of Christ (Eph.1:23). The corollaries of this include the insistence that the Son created the world, and the Son was the Person who revealed Himself in the Old Testament theophanies.

This is brilliant, but still fails. To the first question raised: why is the response to the Father not an adequate exercise of the Son's goodness? Edwards suggests that the Son did not take the initiative in the relationship, and so has a desire to communicate

²⁶ The word 'proof' here needs care: Edwards is not, at this point, operating as a natural theologian; rather, he is arguing on the basis of the biblical revelation about God (perfect goodness, *inter alia*) that this demands God to be understood in a Trinitarian way. Careful analysis of his concept of 'goodness' might also demonstrate that it is based on fundamentally Biblical ideas, adding further weight to this point. The Trinitarian argument Edwards uses here will be of significance when I come to offer comparisons of his understanding with modern writings on hell in ch.5 below.

²⁷ YE13 p.272.

Himself on His own account.²⁸ This, of course, leaves Edwards in precisely the position he was before: now the Son's fulfilment depends on the creation, so God still needs the world and creation remains an *εργον φυσεως*. Edwards, however, seems not to see either this difficulty or any solution to it, as he is silent on the subject for nearly four years, until a spate of entries begins with 271, in late 1726. If God is not to need the world, His act of creation must be for His own sake. It is this idea that Edwards begins to discuss here, using again his Trinitarian apparatus, and he apparently recognises that to speak of God making 'himself his end' sounds dangerously like ascribing selfishness to God, and so he proposes God making His Son His end. Once again, the language is beautiful: 'It perhaps was thus: God created the world for his Son, that he might prepare a spouse or bride for him to bestow his love upon; so that the mutual joys between this bride and bridegroom are the end of the creation.' Once again, the problem is God's dependence on the world for His own fulfilment - the 'joys' of the Son are not complete without His creaturely Bride. Still, God cannot be what He wants to be without the creation - His aseity is still endangered.

In 243²⁹ Edwards adopts a different angle of approach and first proposes a separation: to communicate goodness is indeed an ultimate end, an end in and of itself worthy of God, but so is the display of God's glory. That is, for God to be glorified is not a part of His communication of happiness, but something separate but equally worthy to be God's motive.³⁰ Edwards is led to this, according to this entry by passages of Scripture: Jn.17, 12:28, Is.42:8, 48:11 'and many other such'. It is not a solution to the problem I have raised, but prompts a new line of thinking about God's glory as an ultimate end. Just four entries later (247), we find analysis and definition of this concept: 'For God to glorify himself is to discover himself in his works or, to communicate himself in his works ... in his acts *ad extra* to act worthy of himself, or

²⁸ This, in passing, is further evidence that Edwards' account of the Trinity was more nearly Cappadocian than Augustinian. The Spirit is mentioned several times in the *Miscellanies* entry under discussion, but the references are not integral to the line I am tracing.

²⁹ According to Schafer's dating, 271 precedes 243 and 247 - see *YE13* Table 2, facing p.90.

³⁰ At this point, Edwards' departure from Reformed orthodoxy becomes significant, although he will later find in Maastricht the way to resolve this. See section 4 below.

to act excellently ... the glory of God is the shining forth of his perfections; and the world was created that they might shine forth...'31

This is perhaps an appropriate point to pause for some preliminary reflections. Edwards has introduced various possibilities for God's ultimate purpose in creating the world, which all overlap to some extent: the exercise of God's goodness; the communication of God's happiness; the display of God's glory. These begin as simple suggestions, but are quickly developed as Edwards sees problems and solutions. In particular, an awareness of both the threat to God's aseity implied by making Him somehow dependent on the creation, if not for His *esse*, then at least for His *bene esse*, and an acute awareness of the impropriety of making God's motives somehow selfish are addressed, if not totally solved, by a conscious invocation of Trinitarian doctrine. In this, Edwards has laid the foundations of his approach: what will follow will essentially be an analysis of the nature of, and relationships between, goodness, communication, and glory in a Trinitarian context in an attempt to avoid both the charge of selfishness and the threat to aseity.³² With this map in place, I return to the historical analysis.

In entry 332 (late 1728³³) the beginnings of an answer to the threat to God's aseity start to become apparent: the language chosen now is that of communication, but what is new is an analysis of God's fulfilment: 'It don't make God the happier to be praised, but it is a becoming and condecant and worthy thing for infinite and supreme excellency to shine forth: 'tis not his happiness but his excellency so to do.'³⁴ This is a key advance, in that here it is appropriate for God to create, rather than in some sense necessary. With this insight, creation is finally an *εργον θελησεως* – something appropriate and beautiful for God to do, but not something necessary for His perfection. A hint of a second theme is also present: 'the communication of himself to their understandings is his glory, and the communication of himself with

³¹ *YE13* pp.360-361.

³² Although, as I have indicated above, Edwards is following the same line as the Fathers took, it seems he is doing it without any conscious borrowings from Patristic theology.

³³ There is a misprint in Schafer's Table of dates: under '1726 Sept.' the confusing entry '331-314' appears; as p.84 of the introduction makes clear, this should read '311-314.'

³⁴ *YE13* p.410.

respect to their wills, the enjoying faculty, is their happiness.’³⁵ Although it is undeveloped here, we shall see that this division becomes a Trinitarian one in Edwards’ thought, with Word and Spirit as God’s two hands in the world, the former reaching out to the understandings of His creatures and the latter to their wills.

A year later, in late 1729 and early 1730, Edwards produced three entries (445, 448 and 461) which take these thoughts further. 445 is a long analysis of the place of exercise of goodness and display of glory as joint ultimate ends. Goodness must be exercised for its own sake, or it is not goodness, in distinction from every other attribute which is glorified. Edwards invokes the example of justice, and the argument he has used previously: God can be just without ever acting justly - so long as He never acts unjustly; God cannot be good without ever acting in a good way. 461 continues this theme, arguing on the basis of Scripture that ‘God delighteth in the creatures’ happiness in a sense that he doth not do in their misery.’³⁶ This, surely, is a significant statement, and Edwards takes it further: ‘the glory of God cannot be considered as the proper end of God’s acts of justice.’³⁷ God acts justly because He is just, although He might have had in mind the glorifying of Himself when He gave Himself occasion to act justly. God enjoys His creatures’ happiness, and God enjoys their knowledge of, and delight in, His perfections. The latter demands the display of those perfections, and so may involve (in the case of justice) suffering for some creatures, but this is a bad thing, an inappropriate thing, in itself, although outweighed by the good of God’s perfection being seen in the final analysis. There is little need to draw attention to how far we are from visions of Edwards’ God as ‘the cosmic sadist’ at this point.

Miscellanies 448 takes up Trinitarian analysis once again: God’s self-glorification *ad intra* occurs in two ways: in knowing Himself in His own perfect idea, the Son, and in flowing forth in love and delight for Himself - the Spirit. Correspondingly, His glory *ad extra* is in two ways: being known by His creatures and being loved and enjoyed by His creatures. In this, the fullness consists in God’s delight in giving to His creatures; He cannot receive anything from them. All His communication of glory *ad*

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.* p.502.

extra is an overflow of the dynamics of His own inter-Trinitarian life. God is given nothing by creation, so His aseity is preserved, but God enjoys giving something to the creation, and so He creates.

In entry 547, Edwards brings in another necessary complication to this story: the reality of history. Providence, Edwards asserts, has a goal, which will be reached at the end of the world. At that point, it will have been necessary for each moment in history to have happened, or 'providence never would have ordered them. The world never would have been in such a state.'³⁸ Edwards actually uses this as a proof of the survival of intelligent beings, as their memories are all that remain of the intermediate states of history. This corollary is in danger of being inconsistent with Edwards' own metaphysics, which ascribes existence to reality in the mind of God, and history to the sequential nature of that reality,³⁹ but the attempt to account for the fact of history is significant, and will become a part of Edwards' final position.

Entry 553 is also significant, as in it Edwards pulls together much of what has gone before, and makes a further move: the removal of goodness from its prime place amongst the attributes. All divine attributes, Edwards now argues, are exercised only because of creation, and 'it is fit that the divine attributes should have exercise.'⁴⁰ This is not because God needs to exercise his perfections, but because He delights to. In fact, God exercises His perfections *ad intra*, in that 'He infinitely loves and delights in Himself,' and this contains the *ad extra* exercise, but is not precisely the same. Hence, it is appropriate for God to give Himself *ad extra* exercise - to create.

And this, broadly, remains Edwards' settled position until the burst of activity that accompanied his desire to publish his conclusions in *End of Creation*. In the *Miscellanies* a few entries still appear, but add little: 581 and 586 reiterate that all things God creates are for His own purposes; three entries in the 600s show Edwards trying to refine his language to avoid any weakening of aseity. These deserve some comment: 662 uses the language of appropriateness once again: 'it was meet that His

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ Townsend, *op.cit.* p.135.

³⁹ On this see ch.4 below.

⁴⁰ Townsend, *op.cit.* p.136.

attributes and perfections should be expressed.’⁴¹ 679 asserts that God does not need creatures, but would be less happy if His desire to display His own goodness were frustrated, a point which is refined still further in entry 699: ‘God don’t seek His own glory for any happiness He receives by it, as men are gratified in having their excellencies gazed at ... but God seeks the display of His own glory as a thing in itself excellent.’⁴² This is a theme Edwards develops elsewhere:⁴³ God, in putting Himself first, is not being selfish, in that it is appropriate for all things – including God – to put God first.

One further entry from around this time is interesting in this connection. In entry 681,⁴⁴ Edwards links the gift of happiness to creatures with their (eschatological) being in God, so as to essay a link between God’s self-glorification and God’s gift of happiness to His creatures. The saints are indeed ‘exalted to glorious dignity’ and to ‘fellowship’ and even ‘union’ with God Himself,⁴⁵ but ‘care is taken’ (by God, we presume) that this is not their own glory, but that it comes to them as they are ‘in a person that is God’. Edwards’ conclusion is full of admiration for the systematic cleverness of this arrangement: ‘Thus wisely hath God ordered all things for his own glory that however great & marvelous the exercises of his grace & love & condescension are to the creature, yet he alone may be exalted & that he may be all in all.’⁴⁶ Here, Edwards discovers, almost in passing, is a way to talk about God’s gift of goodness as another way of His act of self-glorification.

Following this, there is a gap of over three hundred entries without reference to the question of the end of creation.⁴⁷ Then, beginning with 1066, a spurt of entries occurs

⁴¹ *ibid.* p.138.

⁴² *ibid.* p.139.

⁴³ For example, the notion of consent to ‘being-in-general’ (*i.e.* God) in *True Virtue*; see *YE8* p.540 & *passim*.

⁴⁴ Thus far published only in the Dwight edition of Edwards’ *Works* in 1830; the quotations about all come from the fourth page of Thomas Schafer’s transcript of the entry.

⁴⁵ Edwards will even say that the saints are given to be ‘in some respects divine in glory and happiness’!

⁴⁶ The grammatical idiosyncrasies and (particularly) the lack of punctuation, are characteristic of Edwards’ unpublished notebooks. The editors of *YE* are (quite rightly) silently tidying up the English as they publish, but in the absence of their authoritative edition, I have chosen to reproduce it as exactly as possible.

⁴⁷ Although the ideas that Edwards had been developing do arise in passing in other contexts. To cite merely one example, some relevant comments may be found in *Miscellanies* 864 (as yet unpublished, but an adequate text may be found in *BT2* pp.511-514), discussing the moral government of the world.

representing the creative effort Edwards put into systematising his thoughts for publication in *End of Creation*. Rather than analysing all these before turning to that statement, I will next address the published work, and make reference to *Miscellanies* entries where relevant.⁴⁸

2.3 Edwards' Mature Position in the End of Creation

Concerning the End for which God Created the World is the first of two dissertations Edwards was preparing for publication on his death.⁴⁹ It is a characteristically careful attempt to answer a question which, as the foregoing will have made abundantly clear, Edwards had been thinking about throughout his life. In offering a reading of it, one important hermeneutical point must be made: as Paul Ramsey, the modern editor of the *Two Dissertations*, makes clear they should be read together, not apart.⁵⁰ This is more of an issue, perhaps, in the interpretation of *True Virtue* (as Ramsey's examples show⁵¹) but will also affect a reading of the first dissertation in important ways, as I hope to demonstrate. This section, then, will contain a (necessarily⁵²) full exposition of *End of Creation* coupled with a briefer reading of *True Virtue* to make Edwards' final account of the teleology of creation clear.

End of Creation begins with an introduction defining terms and setting forth axioms, in which Edwards is concerned to make distinction between a 'chief end,' an 'ultimate

⁴⁸ It is perhaps worth noting that Edwards does make occasional reference in the *Miscellanies* to other works that have clearly influenced him as he was preparing to write *End of Creation*. Apart from the obvious Biblical interest (see, for instance, entries 1080 and 1081), Edwards transcribes a passage from Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles of Religion* that clearly influences, or at least supports, Edwards' own argument in entry 1253 (see particularly p.5 of the Schafer transcript), and also a series of quotations from Thomas Goodwin in entries 1275 and 1277a.

⁴⁹ The companion volume is *True Virtue*; both may be found in YE8.

⁵⁰ YE8 pp.5-6. *Miscellanies* 1208 (which is published in an edited form in both Townsend (pp.140-149) and the *Miscellaneous Remarks*) demonstrates this point quite well. It is headed 'END of the CREATION. GLORY OF GOD Nature of REDEMPTION. SATISFACTION OF CHRIST Nature of TRUE VERTUE & RELIGION', which might be considered an ambitious programme for one notebook entry! The contents, however, demonstrate the close linkage between the theses of the *Two Dissertations* in Edwards' mind.

⁵¹ *ibid.* p.6 n.5..

⁵² Necessary because there is so little attention paid to this Dissertation in the secondary literature. Jenson's account (*op.cit.* pp.38-43) is characteristically insightful, although brief, and Gerstner makes occasional comments throughout his *Rational Biblical Theology* (*cit.*). Other than this, very little has been published.

end' and a 'subordinate end.'⁵³ Starting with the last, a subordinate end is something sought for the sake of something else - the example of buying a medicine, not because of a desire to own it, but because of a desire to regain health is offered.⁵⁴ An ultimate end, by contrast, is sought purely for its own sake. Clearly, there may be a chain of subordinate ends leading to the one ultimate end, and a thing may be both an ultimate end and a subordinate end - sought partially for its own account and partially for the sake of something else.⁵⁵ Contrasting with both of these is a chief end, which is the thing 'most valued.' This is not the same as an ultimate end - a person may have several ultimate ends - things valued for themselves - but only one will be the chief end. On the basis of these distinctions, Edwards makes a series of comments concerning purposefulness, which lead in to a discussion of God's aims and goals in creating the world. Edwards suggests that, if there is only one ultimate end, this may therefore be termed the 'supreme end'.⁵⁶ He indicates here that he will show this to be the case with God, although as yet no argument for this position is offered.⁵⁷ The act of creation is directed towards this supreme end, although God having created, a number of other ultimate ends (which Edwards terms 'consequential ultimate ends') come into view. It is pleasing to God to act justly, for instance, and so this is an end in itself after the fact of creation, but not the reason for creating. All God's works will clearly be governed by His supreme end, but any given act of God may also be governed by consequential ultimate ends as well.⁵⁸ Any general work of providence, however, will be governed by God's original ultimate end. Finally in this section, Edwards raises the possibility of multiple original ultimate ends in God, and although he has already indicated that he will argue that this is not the case, the position may not yet be assumed.⁵⁹

Thus far, Edwards has merely clarified the question he is asking: what is (are) God's supreme end(s) in creating the world? He begins his answer with a chapter entitled

⁵³ *ibid.* pp.405-415. A note in the *Miscellanies* between entries 1355 and 1356 shows Edwards working on these ideas.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.405.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.406.

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p.410.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.413.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.414-415.



‘What Reason Teaches.’⁶⁰ This is because, he explains, he is engaged in apologetic work, and so must begin with reason to meet objections based on reason. In the first section of this chapter, six general dictates of reason are offered:⁶¹

1. God’s aseity.
2. That anything presupposed by God’s work cannot be its end (e.g. God’s own existence).
3. The most valuable thing attainable by creation must be God’s end.
4. Hence, if possible, God will be His own end in creating, so that God’s self-revelation is an appropriate end.
5. Whatever is valuable in itself, which can be shown to be God’s purpose in creation, must be an ultimate end.
6. Therefore, any valuable thing resulting from God’s creation can be assumed to be an ultimate end.

On the basis of this, the second section of the chapter asks what good things are the consequence of creation.⁶² Four are listed. Firstly, the exercise of God’s attributes is valuable in itself: if God delights in His attributes, then He will delight in their display. Secondly, it is more valuable if these perfections are not just exercised but seen to be exercised, and so God’s perfection is known by other beings. Thirdly, this is again more valuable if His perfections are not just seen and known, but loved and delighted in. Finally, God’s fullness of perfections, beauty and happiness is capable of communication, and this is also valuable in itself. So, Edwards asserts: ‘it was [God’s] last end, that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fullness of good *ad extra*, or without himself, and the disposition to communicate himself or diffuse his own *fullness*, which we must conceive of being originally in God as a perfection of his nature, was what moved him to create the world.’⁶³

The fourth thesis of the first section in this chapter had suggested that, if possible, God should be His own end in creating. Edwards’ third section of this second chapter⁶⁴ is devoted to demonstrating that, in each of the four points made above, this

⁶⁰ *ibid.* pp.417-463.

⁶¹ *ibid.* pp.419-427.

⁶² *ibid.* pp.428-435.

⁶³ *ibid.* pp.433-434. These arguments may be seen developing in *Miscellanies* 1182 (Townsend, p.140).

⁶⁴ *ibid.* pp.436-444.

is precisely what God is doing. The first three points are trivial: God's love of His own perfections naturally implies that He values their display, and their being known and loved. The fourth end, the communication or emanation of God's fullness, is more difficult. Edwards starts by drawing a distinction between love in general, which is God's disposition to love, and love in a strict sense, which presupposes an object to be loved. Given this, it is God's delight in His own glory which causes Him to communicate and diffuse it. The church is called the 'fullness' and the 'glory' of Christ, so the Church is God's end in creating: 'His exercising his goodness, and gratifying his benevolence to them in particular, may be the spring of all God's proceedings through the universe.'⁶⁵ But God Himself must be the ultimate end: the Church can only be a consequential end. This is explained by reference to the communications that God makes: God communicates divine knowledge, but the creature's knowledge of God is simply participation in God's knowledge of Himself. God communicates virtue and holiness, and the creature participates in God's own moral excellency. God communicates happiness, and the creature, rejoicing in who God is, is participating in God's own joy in Himself. In all of this, the concept of participation, the Church being in Christ and the Spirit being in each particular Christian, is clearly key. Because, in Edwards' soteriology, the Church participates in the divine life,⁶⁶ in making the Church His end God is making Himself His end. The more we participate in these perfections, the closer we draw to God: 'The image is more and more perfect, and so the good in the creature comes forever nearer and nearer to an identity with that which is in God.'⁶⁷ This is movement towards a fulfilment of Christ's own prayer recorded in John 17, as we share the unity He has with His Father, 'being,' in Edwards' words, 'as it were, one with God.'⁶⁸

So in each of the ends postulated in the second section, God makes Himself His own ultimate end. Edwards' position is now basically in place; the last section of this

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.440; see also *Miscellanies* 952 (in the continuation, which occurs after entry 954 in the manuscript; p.10 of Schafer's transcript) '...the churches of Christ (for whose sakes chiefly all heaven & earth is made)...' Robert Jenson makes the same point in a recent essay: 'the church is responsible for the world in the elementary sense that were it not for the church there would be no world.' Jenson, 'The Church's Responsibility for the World' in Braaten, Carl E. & Jenson, Robert W. (eds) *The Two Cities of God: The Church's Responsibility for the Earthly City* Eerdmans, Cambridge, 1997 pp.1-10; p.1.

⁶⁶ On this point see ch.4 below.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.443.

chapter turns to objections to what has come before.⁶⁹ Firstly, the objection that this impairs God's aseity - that He is apparently here fulfilling a lack within Himself. Edwards answers that God's pleasure is pleasure in Himself, which nothing can hinder, so His happiness is genuinely independent. Aseity is threatened by any account that assumes that there is a reason God created the world, and, by making God His own end, Edwards is as far from threatening it as any other account can be.⁷⁰ The second objection is that God is selfish, if He acts as He is presented here. Edwards here invokes His metaphysics: God's self-regard is regard to being in general, and so in God selfishness and unselfishness are meaningless terms, or at least they have the same definition. Because of this, God's interests exactly coincide with the interests of the whole, and God's self-regard causes Him to regard the interests of the creature.⁷¹ Thirdly, Edwards anticipates that his account will lead to accusations that God is ignoble, in that He should not be interested in seeing Himself applauded. Once again, the identity of God's being with being-in-general provides a response: love of self and love of all (*i.e.* true virtue) are not distinguished, so love of self is virtuous, not ignoble. A second response asserts that it is not unworthy of God to value the opinions of His creatures, because of His 'infinite grace and condescension.'⁷² Finally, if esteem is deserved it is not ignoble to value it.⁷³ The final objection Edwards deals with is the suggestion that this account diminishes the grace of God, and hence the obligation to gratitude placed on the creature. Once again, Edwards resorts to his metaphysical position to insist that God's glory and the creature's good are not distinct: 'God in seeking his glory, therein seeks the good of his creatures: because the emanation of his glory implies the communicated excellency and happiness of his creature.'⁷⁴

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.* pp.445-463.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* pp.445-450. Edwards does not here identify the *εργον φυσσεως* – *εργον θελησεως* distinction that I have been working with, but the underlying concept seems to be present, if not articulated. He teaches it expressly in a sermon, *The Excellency of Christ* (BT2 pp.680-689), where he says '[Christ's] proceeding from the Father, in his eternal generation or filiation, argues no proper dependence on the *will* of the Father; for that proceeding was natural and *necessary*, and not arbitrary.' (p.682; italics original).

⁷¹ *ibid.* pp.450-453. See further my discussion of *True Virtue* below.

⁷² *ibid.* p.457.

⁷³ *ibid.* pp.453-458.

⁷⁴ *ibid.* pp.458-463; quotation from p.459.

Edwards turns in his second chapter to ask 'What is to be learned from Holy Scriptures concerning God's last end in the creation of the world.'⁷⁵ Firstly, Scripture is constantly clear that God makes Himself His end - He is both the 'first efficient cause' and the 'last final cause' of all things; this is the meaning of 'Alpha and Omega' language, as well as the teaching of many texts.⁷⁶ Having established this initial position, Edwards outlines the exegetical principles he will be adopting in examining it in more detail - in particular, in asking in what sense God makes Himself His end.⁷⁷

The first group of principles insists that those things that are spoken of most frequently, and most generally as God's purpose are most likely to be His ultimate end.⁷⁸ Then Edwards proceeds to explain the theological basis of the exegesis he will perform. The moral (*i.e.* 'spiritual', in current usage) world, he asserts, is the reason for the rest of creation to exist, so whatever is spoken of as the end of the moral creation may be assumed to be the end of all creation.⁷⁹ The purpose of a thing may be inferred from its use, and providence is the description of the use of creation, so the aim of God's works of providence will be the end of creation, particularly as they are applied to the moral realm.⁸⁰ Again, theologically, the moral world is made for that part of it that is good,⁸¹ so the purpose of this part may be seen to be the purpose of all creation. On the basis of this, Edwards makes a series of more precise assertions: that which defines the goodness of the moral world,⁸² that which makes this goodness admirable, and that which is the reason for the commendation of pious people in the Scripture, can each be regarded as the chief end of all creation. These prepare the way for the final exegetical position: Jesus Christ is both the head and goal of the

⁷⁵ Chapter title; *ibid.* p.465.

⁷⁶ *ibid.* pp.467-468.

⁷⁷ *ibid.* pp.469-474.

⁷⁸ Positions 1-3; pp.469-470.

⁷⁹ Position 4; pp.470-471. See chapter 3 below for a discussion of this doctrine of creation.

⁸⁰ Positions 5-6; p.471.

⁸¹ Recalling Jenson's phrase in n.65 above, it is the *church* that is the reason for creation, not merely humanity in general.

⁸² *i.e.* the ethical commands of Scripture.

moral world, and the chief pattern of piety, so whatever He sought as His great purpose is the chief end of God in creating.⁸³

Edwards' purpose in offering these exegetical positions would seem to be twofold: to narrow the question asked, from a general one about creation to a more specific one about the church and, particularly, Jesus Christ; and to widen the available evidence, since Scripture speaks far more of the church (including of course, in Edwards' terms, Israel) and of Christ than it does about general questions. In the next few sections, Edwards goes on to offer, on the basis of these principles, a series of answers drawn from Scripture to the question of God's ultimate end in creating, before working theologically with these answers to demonstrate their coherence with each other, and with the positions reached by means of 'reason' in the earlier chapter.

Applying these principles to Scripture, then, will offer various possible answers concerning God's ultimate end in His work. Firstly, God's 'glory'⁸⁴ is regularly described as God's ultimate purpose - it is the purpose of the church, and what Christ sought as His highest end.⁸⁵ Again, God's 'Name' and 'praise' are both spoken of in Scripture in significant places⁸⁶ as the purpose of God's actions. Finally, picking up a theme which I noted as important in the development of his position, Edwards still insists that the exercise of God's goodness is appropriate in itself in a way that the exercise of His justice is not:

According to Scripture, communicating good to the creatures is what is in itself pleasing to God: and that this is not merely subordinately agreeable, and esteemed valuable on account of its relation to a further end, as it is in executing justice in punishing the sins of men; which God is inclined to as fit and necessary in certain cases, and on account of the good ends attained by it: but what God is inclined to on its own account, and what he delights in simply and ultimately.⁸⁷

So, Edwards finds 'glory,' 'Name,' 'praise' and 'communicating goodness' as appropriate ultimate ends for God, according to Scripture. Before discussing their

⁸³ Position 12; *YE8* p.474.

⁸⁴ At this point Edwards simply uses the word. His discussion of its meaning will follow later.

⁸⁵ *YE8* pp.475-492.

⁸⁶ e.g. the various events surrounding the Exodus are said to be 'for the sake of God's name' p.494, referring to II Sam.7:23; Ps.106:8; Is.63:12.

⁸⁷ p.503.

inter-relation, he offers a brief exposition of what Scripture means when speaking of God's 'glory' and 'Name'. The etymology of *kavod* in Hebrew carries the idea of weightiness or greatness, sometimes just possessed, sometimes in their display. 'Glory', then, refers firstly to the internal greatness, majesty, excellency and dignity possessed by (or inherent in) a person, and the satisfaction or happiness that this produces. Secondly, it denotes this internal glory in its display, or visible exhibition. Applied to God this means the display of His goodness and grace, particularly in the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ.⁸⁸ But, Edwards insists, it means more than this: not just the exhibition of God's goodness and fullness, but their communication.⁸⁹ Thirdly, 'glory' can mean the apprehension, and hence knowledge, of displayed glory.⁹⁰ Finally, it may also be a synonym for 'praise' - the creature's delight in, and celebration of, God's glory.⁹¹ Finally here, Edwards indicates that 'Name' is virtually synonymous with 'glory' in the Scriptures.

So, Edwards has gathered up 'glory,' 'Name,' 'praise,' and the communication of God's goodness into one multifaceted concept involving God's perfections, and particularly His mercy and grace, being displayed, known, rejoiced in and communicated. Thus, what Scripture teaches concerning God's ultimate end in creating the world is shown to be co-incident with the results of the investigation into 'what reason teaches'. The final section makes explicit the unity of God's ultimate end, and suggests that the 'most common and most apt' name for it is 'the glory of God.'⁹²

⁸⁸ p.518-521; a footnote to this section (p.518 n.5) comments on Rom.9:22-23 in the following terms: 'In the 22nd verse where the Apostle speaks of God's making known the power of his wrath, saith he, "God willing to show his wrath, and make his power known." But in verse 23rd (*sic*) when he comes to speak of mercy, he saith, "That he might make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy."' This, in passing, suggests that Ramsey's desire to link God's glory with God's wisdom, power, justice and goodness (YE8 p.514 n.7) is misconstrued: glory has properly to do with mercy and goodness in a way it does not with justice and power, at least in Edwards' thought.

⁸⁹ 'The word "glory," as applied to God or Christ, sometimes evidently signifies the communications of God's fullness, and means much the same thing with God's abundant and exceeding goodness and grace.' p.518.

⁹⁰ pp.521-522.

⁹¹ pp.522-523.

⁹² p.526. Edwards had reached this position early in the spurt of entries in the *Miscellanies* that show him beginning to work up to writing this dissertation. Entry 1066, for example, (Townsend, p.139) begins by asserting that language seems to lack a term that is adequate for God's ultimate purpose ('a proper general word to express the supreme end of the creation'). However, having further identified the problem as the need for a word which will cover both God's self-glorification and His self-communication, Edwards finally asserts that both these are described as 'God's being glorified' in

This has been demonstrated biblically, in that the term 'glory' will cover all these areas in its Scriptural use. Edwards will now demonstrate it theologically; these different components 'are all but the emanation of God's glory; or the exceeding brightness and fullness of that divinity diffused, overflowing, and as it were enlarged; or in one word (*sic!*) existing *ad extra*.'⁹³ The demonstration is achieved by what I take to be a Trinitarian argument, although at no point is it explicitly so. Edwards argues that 'God's internal glory, as it is in God, is either in his understanding or will.'⁹⁴ His glory in the former is His self-knowledge; in the latter His holiness and happiness. Now, the psychological analogies of the Trinity are a part of Edwards' heritage,⁹⁵ and in his *Essay on the Trinity*⁹⁶ Edwards explicitly identifies the Son with God's perfect knowledge of Himself in His understanding and the Spirit with God's perfect delight in Himself in His will, a passage Edwards he invokes when talking about the end of creation in *Miscellanies* 679, if not in the final work. It is surely not unreasonable, then, to see Edwards offering a Trinitarian account of God's glory here.⁹⁷

Such a reading is supported by a number of the *Miscellanies* entries that Edwards writes as he is gathering his material for the *End of Creation*, where we have a

Scripture. Again, in entries 1082, 1084 and 1092 (all unpublished), Edwards can be seen working at the different senses that the word 'glory' bears in the Scriptures.

⁹³ p.527.

⁹⁴ p.528.

⁹⁵ I have indicated my reasons for thinking Edwards' account of the Trinity is more nearly Cappadocian than Augustinian in a number of places throughout this thesis; the current observation does not weaken this point, in that whilst psychological analogies point strongly towards an undue emphasis on divine unity at the expense of the real hypostatic existence of the Three Persons, the link is not inevitable. This is particularly the case within a Puritan tradition which operated with a 'faculty psychology' that so stressed the division between understanding and will in human beings that the two were in danger of becoming hypostatized. Certainly, under Locke's influence, Edwards decisively modified this view, but his move was not necessarily a flat denial of the distinction of the faculties. It could as well be seen as retaining the relative independence (and hence hypostatisation) of the faculties but insisting that their interdependence also be recognised (that an analogy of perichoresis be adopted). See YE2 pp.11-15. For an account of Puritan faculty psychology and Edwards' rejection of it see Cherry, Conrad *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* Doubleday, Garden City, 1966 pp.10-22.

⁹⁶ In Helm, Paul (ed.) *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings* James Clarke, Cambridge, 1971 pp.99-131.

⁹⁷ The pervasiveness of psychological analogies in the tradition may even permit an assumption that Edwards expected his readers to recognise Trinitarian references here without any explicit mention. Jenson's comment perhaps makes the point: 'And yet all this language [concerning the glory of God] is in fact christology, though only tentatively so.' *America's Theologian* p.41.

repeated insistence on the parallel between the twofold going forth *ad extra* that Edwards sums up with the word 'glory' and the twofold going forth of the Father's substance *ad intra* which is the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit.⁹⁸ These entries are actually rather repetitive, with the same basic argument being presented in slightly different words each time. The flowing out of God's glory is twofold, consisting in the communication of knowledge to the creature and the communication of love to the creature. These correspond⁹⁹ to the internal begetting of the Son, or Logos, or Wisdom, of God, and proceeding of the Spirit, or Love, of God. In entry 1082, these are described as 'only a second proceeding of the same persons; their going forth *ad extra* as before they proceeded [*sic*] *ad intra*.'

This repetition works because Edwards sees all God's glory and perfections as summed up in the perfection of knowledge in His understanding and the perfections of virtue and happiness in His will:

The whole of God's internal good or glory, is in these three things, viz. his infinite knowledge; his infinite virtue or holiness, and his infinite joy and happiness. Indeed, there are a great many attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving or talking of them: but all may be reduced to these; or to the degree, circumstances and relations of these ... And therefore the external glory of God consists in the communication of these.¹⁰⁰

The creature who knows God is participating in God's perfect knowledge of Himself, and so the display of God's perfections is equivalent to the communication of His knowledge. Equally, the creature who loves and delights in God is the recipient of the communication of His happiness and joy. True holiness is nothing but superlative love for God's beauty, so the creature who loves God is also participating in God's holiness, and so is the recipient of the communication of God's holiness. The underlying Trinitarian conception suggests that participation in the Son and Spirit is

⁹⁸ This may be found in entries 1082, 1151, 1218 and 1266a. Of these, only the parts of 1218 that are in Townsend (pp.149-152) are published in any convenient source.

⁹⁹ In entry 1082 'answer'; in 1151 'are agreeable to' or are 'correspondant to'; in 1218, again, 'are agreeable to'; in 1266a 'are answerable to'. Too much should not be read into the precise wording of *Miscellanies* entries, however; Edwards was here recording his thoughts for private use, not seeking an exact statement to communicate them to the public.

¹⁰⁰ p.528; it is worthy of notice, in passing, that in this passage Edwards has succeeded in gathering up the whole tradition of discourse about the attributes of God into an overarching Trinitarian framework. Edwards makes the same point in his *Essay on the Trinity*, as I shall discuss later. See further my comparison of Edwards with Barth on the divine perfections at the end of this chapter.

what is intended,¹⁰¹ and so that notions of the indwelling Spirit and salvation as participation in the Son are not far from the surface here. Further, Edwards argues, our creation in the *imago dei*, as having both knowledge and will, means that the distinctions in the overall concept of glory are suited for our appropriation, not just God's gift. Thus the end of creation is one: 'God's internal glory or fullness extant externally, or existing in its emanation.'¹⁰²

Edwards has one final point to make: he has argued earlier that it is fitting for God to make Himself His end, but this overflow of glory appears to be directed towards the good of the creature. The response offered is a reiteration of the central concepts of communication and participation: the creature's knowledge, love and joy are God's own knowledge, love and joy given (communicated) to the creature, and then returned to God. A lengthy quote is perhaps useful here:

In the creature's knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fullness is received and returned. Here is both an *emanation* and *remanation*. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair. (italics original)¹⁰³

Once again, the language seems to demand Trinitarian interpretation, but that is not the key point. God, in communicating Himself to the creature, is known, loved, rejoiced in – is, in short, glorified. So God is, in a sense, His own end in creation. But implicit in this is a stricter sense in which this is true. Another quotation, if only because the position is so surprising, found so far west of the Danube:

God's respect to the creature's good, and his respect to himself ... are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is happiness in union with himself. The creature is no further happy with this happiness which God makes his ultimate end than he becomes one with God. The more happiness the greater union: when the happiness is perfect, the union is perfect. And as the happiness will be increasing to eternity, the union will become more and

¹⁰¹ 'Thus that which proceeds from God *ad extra* is agreeable [*sic*] to the twofold subsistences which proceed from him *ad intra* which is the Son & the holy Spirit the Son being the Idea of God or the knowledge of God & the holy Ghost which is the love of God and joy in God.' *Miscellanies* 1218.

¹⁰² p.531.

¹⁰³ p.531.

more strict and perfect; more and more like to that between God the Father and the Son; who are so united that their interest is perfectly one ... in this view, the creature must be looked upon as united to God in an infinite strictness.¹⁰⁴

Everything that has gone before has, in fact, presupposed this full-blown *theosis* doctrine, but still, perhaps, it is a shock. Nonetheless, with this in place the position is coherent and consistent. God's first purpose is to share His own life, and so His fullness overflows to creatures that they may be drawn in to the eternal life of God. An image Edwards used very early on in his quest, in *Miscellanies* 271 (1726) which I have already quoted,¹⁰⁵ and returned to repeatedly, recurs once again at the end of this text, as the 'one flesh' union between husband and wife becomes a type of the final union between Christ and His church. An earlier statement is more attractive, if less careful, so it is perhaps fitting to end my exposition by one more time from the *Miscellanies*: 'The end of the creation of God was to provide a spouse for his Son Jesus Christ that might enjoy him & on whom he might pour forth his love, & the end of all things in providence are to make way for the exceeding expressions of Christ's love to his spouse & for her exceeding close & intimate union with & high & glorious enjoyment of him.'¹⁰⁶ Only now, it is not just the love of the Son, but the mutual love, knowledge and holiness of the Trinity that is given to the church.

The argument of this dissertation will be central to my thesis, and it is not well known, so I have spelt it out at very great length. The process of exploring the adequacy of this account will be the burden of all that is to follow, and addressed finally in my conclusions in chapter 6, but some initial remarks may usefully be made here. Firstly, Ramsey, in his editorial notes on the text, constantly raises the issue of a suspicion of Neoplatonism, particularly in regard to the language of 'emanation'.¹⁰⁷ His response is to seek to use textual analysis to demonstrate that this is not what

¹⁰⁴ pp.533-534.

¹⁰⁵ n.47, on p.52.

¹⁰⁶ *Miscellanies* 710, appendix (thus far published only in the Dwight edition of 1830; my quotation is taken from Schafer's transcript). As I indicated in n.80 to chapter 1 (on p.36), this image is recurrent in Edwards' writings. Just a few entries later in the *Miscellanies*, it appears again: 'There was [supply 'as'] it were an eternal society or family in the Godhead in the Trinity of persons it seems to be Gods [sic] design to admit the church into the divine family as his sons [sic] wife...' (entry 741, again, published only in Dwight).

Edwards meant; how successful this may be is a question I leave to others, because my contention is that a neoplatonic reading of Edwards is simply inconceivable, if my Trinitarian reading is accepted. The Fathers, after all, avoided platonizing emanationisms precisely by asserting the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁰⁸

Secondly, concerns about morality may be raised. Is God not, despite all Edwards' arguments to the contrary, painted as simply selfish here? The objection has apparent force, in that there is little in *End of Creation* to defend against such charges¹⁰⁹ – but then it is only one of *Two Dissertations*. An understanding of the account of virtue Edwards offers in *True Virtue* will be sufficient to answer this charge.

The second dissertation has been much more widely received and read than the first, a fact which Ramsey suggests has skewed many interpretations.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, this familiarity, and the fact that it is less central to my purposes, will enable me to offer a briefer reading of the second work. Edwards' concern is to analyse virtue; it is, he asserts, simply beauty in the moral realm,¹¹¹ so the question becomes one of analysis of beauty. This is a task Edwards attempted early in his career, in the *Notes on the Mind*,¹¹² where he had argued that 'all beauty consists in similarness, or identity of relation'¹¹³ - i.e. that proportion, symmetry and harmony are the essence of the quality we call beauty or excellence. Edwards returns to this same point in the posthumous work, and expands it: true virtue is 'general beauty', that is 'beautiful in a comprehensive view as in itself and as related to everything that it stands in connection with.'¹¹⁴ So, stated baldly, true virtue is 'love to Being in general'.¹¹⁵

'Love' can be analysed into 'love of benevolence', which desires good for its objects regardless of their worth, and 'love of complacence', which delights in the beauty of its object. The object of virtuous love is not beauty or gratitude, since these would

¹⁰⁷ See YE8 p.433 n.5; and footnotes later taking the same theme forward.

¹⁰⁸ On this, see Jenson *art.cit.* in Gunton (ed.) *The Doctrine of Creation (cit.)*.

¹⁰⁹ Although there are hints which become more obvious when the work is read with the conclusions of *True Virtue* in mind.

¹¹⁰ YE8 pp.5-6.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p.539.

¹¹² YE6 pp.332-393; begun in 1723 (see Anderson's Introduction in YE6 pp.313-331).

¹¹³ *ibid.* p.334.

¹¹⁴ YE8 p.540.

make virtue its own object, a meaningless position. So the object of virtue must be 'Being, simply considered'¹¹⁶ - which is to say Being-in-general. So, virtue may now be analysed. It will produce love to any individual being, but only so long as that is not in conflict with a higher love - love for Being-in-general. In particular, a being that is opposed to Being-in-general will be opposed and hated by the truly virtuous heart. Thus the strength of benevolence that the truly virtuous person will feel for any given being can be determined: it will first be proportional to the 'degree of *existence*' of that being, and next to the virtue it has - if my primary concern is towards Being-in-general, then I will, as a result of that concern (which is simply virtue) value another being that shares such a concern more than I would if it did not.

Now, after this philosophical analysis Edwards turns (again - this is the second of two works) to explicitly theological considerations. God has infinitely more being than the whole creation together, so love for 'Being-in-general' is simply love for God. Human virtue, then, is wholly composed of love for God, and other loves - spouse, family, country, animal creation - are virtuous to the extent that they are a part of this love. To the extent that they are raised above this love, they are simply and precisely idolatry, which is not virtuous. A truly virtuous mind, however, seeks the promotion of God's glory above all other things, the position reached in the first dissertation.

God's virtue has the same definition, so it 'must consist primarily in *love to himself*.' This is, however, immediately – and crucially – defined: 'the mutual love and friendship which subsists eternally and necessarily between the several persons of the Godhead.'¹¹⁷ The corollary is obvious: God's love to created beings is, as *End of Creation* demonstrated, entirely dependent on His love to Himself. Edwards' position is now complete, and the remainder (and greater part) of the dissertation is an analysis of this position, and a demonstration that systems of ethics that do not make love to God their foundation must be defective.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.* p.541.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* p.544.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* p.557; italics original. A precursor of this position can be seen in *Miscellanies* 1077 (Townsend, p.184), where the fact that God is 'as it were, the sum of all being' means that His holiness 'consists mainly and summarily in his infinite regard or love to himself.'

This, then, is virtue - an entirely theological account, as may have been expected. Are God's motives, according to the first dissertation, selfish or virtuous on these grounds? The immediate answer is both, since in God self-love and love to Being-in-general coincide exactly, but Edwards' account of this introduced the crucial nuance: God's self-love is not the self-love of some arbitrary deity, but of the Triune God of the Christian gospel. It is a love of eternal mutual self-giving, not of selfish solipsism. Once again, the doctrine of the Trinity is central to understanding Edwards' logic - and it is invoked explicitly this time. Selfishness cannot be an issue with this doctrine in place.

On the basis of all this, the question may be put again to the first dissertation: even if God's self-regard is not selfish, it presents a danger for Christian devotion; after all, if God makes His own life His end in all His works, one wonders why human beings should be interested - if God's love is not love *for us*, there is little relevance in discussing it.

Jenson¹¹⁸ suggests that Edwards recognised this danger, and its converse: describing God as making His creatures His end, and so making God simply an excuse for our selfishness. The answer he finds in the dissertation is surely correct: that, through the logic of his metaphysics (the discussion of God as 'being in general' in *True Virtue*), Edwards cuts through the dichotomy: God, in making Himself His own end, makes us His end, and *vice-versa*. This is clear in a passage I have already quoted: 'God's respect to the creature's good, and his respect to himself ... are united in one, as the happiness of the creature aimed at is happiness in union with himself.'¹¹⁹ The *theosis* doctrine, made possible only by the adoption (albeit *sub voce*) of Trinitarian discourse, offers Edwards a way through this difficulty.

My preliminary account of Edwards' understanding of the purpose of creation is now complete. God's end in creating is His own glory. This means the communication of His own knowledge, love and joy to His creatures, and their consequent participation

¹¹⁸ *op.cit.* pp.38-39.

¹¹⁹ *YE8* p.533. See also *Miscellanies* 681, which I have discussed above on p.47.

in Him in increasing measure. The position appears coherent, and adequate in the account of God's character, and of His relationship to creation, that it offers. The remainder of this chapter will be taken up with a discussion of Edwards' account of glory, before exploring how he applies his understanding of God's purpose in creation to various areas of God's action in history in the remainder of the thesis.

2.4 The Glory of God: A Historical and Systematic Comparison

I have already indicated that the bare assertion 'God created for His own glory' was common amongst the Reformed orthodox; detailed descriptions of what is meant by 'the glory of God' are less common.¹²⁰ One exception, however, stands out, and is key: Petrus van Mastricht, in his *Theoretico-Practica Theologia*, treats at some length of glory – the same work that Edwards describes in a letter as 'for divinity in general doctrine, practice and controversy; or as a universal system of divinity ... much better than Turretin, or any other book in the world, excepting the Bible, in my opinion.'¹²¹ Barth, whose knowledge of Reformed orthodoxy is enviable by any standards, follows Mastricht on this issue in his account of the divine perfections, commenting 'So far as I can see, he alone among the Reformed orthodox attempted a detailed examination and presentation of the concept of the *gloria Dei* in a way that does justice to all the biblical statements and references.'¹²² My exploration of Edwards' doctrine of glory must start here.

The *Pars dogmatica* of van Mastricht's chapter on the majesty and glory of God spells out what glory means in a fourfold development.¹²³ Firstly, God's glory is His infinite eminence of being and perfections (*infinita eminentia ... competit ... tum ab essentia ... tum ab attributis*). But this perfection naturally shines, and so God's glory

¹²⁰ Turretin, for instance, does not treat the subject at all in his third topic - 'On the One and Triune God'; the same may be said of Wollebius in I.1 - 'The Essence of God'. Heppe, in his synopsis, lists glory alongside majesty, perfection and blessedness as the final content of all God's attributes - V.43 (p.104).

¹²¹ Letter of Jan 15 1746/7 to Joseph Bellamy, *YE16* pp.216-218; the quotation is from p.217.

¹²² *C.D.* II/1 p.649.

¹²³ van Mastricht, *Theoretico-Practica Theologia* II.22.3-10. Mastricht has, to the best of my knowledge, never been translated into English. I include extensive Latin quotes in my discussion only because my own Latin is not of a standard to provide a reliable translation.

must also include in its definition the brilliance of His perfections and eminence (*perfectionis & eminentiae istius q. fulgor*). But if this brilliance shines out, it is inevitably recognised, and so the recognition of this eminence, called God's face (*agnitio istius eminentiae a qua facies Dei dicitur*) is the third part. And these three together - eminence, brilliance and recognition, make up the internal glory of God, which is coeternal with Him.

Mastricht's derivation of God's glory is not yet complete, however. Fourthly and finally, glorification - the reception and manifestation of internal glory - must be included (*agnitae per fulgorum eminentiae, celebratio seu manifestatio, quae magis proprie glorificatio*). This includes eternal acts of glorification internal to the Trinity: '*Pater glorificat Filium ... Filius vicissim ... Patrem ... Spiritus S. Filium ... & Patrem ...*' It also includes the glorification of God by the recognition and praise of His internal glory in creation - not just the direct praise of angels and human beings, but also the recognition of God's glory in His works - in the gospel, in providence, and so on. These should prompt worship and praise from the intelligent creation, '*quibus omnibus Dei omnipotentia, omniscientia, inexhausta bonitas; agnoscitur & extollitur.*'

The similarity to Edwards' account is evident, but so also are the moves Edwards made. Whilst ideas of overflow and participation are implicit in Mastricht, they have none of the prominence that Edwards was to give to them. This is perhaps explained by the second dissimilarity: in van Mastricht Edwards would have found little or none of the Trinitarian grammar that is so crucial to his mature statement. It is this move, understanding that the word 'God', spoken in Christian discourse, demands Trinitarian content, and working out what that means consistently, that is distinctive to Edwards. Van Mastricht leaves the reader with the feeling that God's glory is seen across a gap - an infinite qualitative distance; a feeling that God remains outside the world He has created, looking in - and perhaps occasionally reaching in, but not intimately involved. Edwards' consciously Trinitarian language offers the possibility of speaking of God as simultaneously other than, and involved with, His world: speaking of God giving not just a vision, but genuinely Himself to His creatures, and

calling His creatures to share in the fullness of joy that is His own life. This is the heart of Edwards' advance.

So much for the background to Edwards' thought. Continuing my initial exploration of this theme, I next turn to a comparison with two recent writers who have made much of the concept of glory. Firstly, a writer within the Reformed tradition who also learnt from van Mastricht on this subject - Karl Barth; and then a friend of Barth's whose attempt to renew aesthetics as a theological theme focused on the Biblical language concerning glory, Hans Urs von Balthasar. A conversation with these two, exploring possible contemporary perspectives on Edwards' account, will conclude this chapter.

Barth's account of the divine perfections is found in *C.D.* II/1, pp.322-677, and is split into three (unequal) sections - an introduction to the divine perfections, an account of the perfections of the divine loving, and an account of the perfections of the divine freedom. The basic definition of the reality of God that Barth is working with here, 'the One who loves in freedom', is itself a Trinitarian formula,¹²⁴ and so he, like Edwards, can be seen to be attempting to gather up all the language concerning God's attributes that is found in the tradition into a more basic (and indeed credal) form. Language of divine glory occurs at the beginning and the end of this account, indicating the importance of this language for Barth.

The initial section on 'The Perfections of God'¹²⁵ uses the word 'glory' to sum up the fullness and the overflow of all the divine perfections. Barth's concern is to find a way to insist (as theologians have almost always sought to insist and, according to Barth, almost always failed to insist) that God's perfections are genuinely His, essentially and immanently, and so our knowledge of them is knowledge of God Himself.

¹²⁴ As is made clear by a phrase very early on in this section: '...God is Father, Son and Holy Ghost, i.e., loves in freedom...' *C.D.* II/1 p.323.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* pp.322-350.

Barth's whole discussion of the divine perfections ends with a subsection on 'The Eternity and Glory of God' which serves to bring together all that has gone before.¹²⁶ Barth's first definition of glory follows Biblical usage: 'God's glory is His dignity and right not only to maintain, but to prove and declare, to denote and almost as it were to make Himself conspicuous and everywhere apparent as the One He is.'¹²⁷ In developing this, Barth follows Reformed orthodoxy: 'It is the self-revealing sum of all divine perfections. It is the fullness of God's deity, the emerging, self-expressing and self manifesting reality of all that God is. It is God's being in so far as this is in itself a being which declares itself.'¹²⁸ This is spelt out in a fourfold account which follows van Mastricht, and a discussion of the category of beauty, which Barth will not make central, but regards as important. Finally, Barth insists that it is proper to God's glory that it should become known: 'It belongs to the essence of the glory of God not to be *gloria* alone but to become *glorificatio*.'¹²⁹

What is striking when this account is placed alongside Edwards' is the similarity: not just the categories of communication and overflow adopted from van Mastricht, but the use of the concept of beauty, and the attempt to bring all this language into a Trinitarian framework. There is no evidence that Barth had any knowledge of Edwards' work, but one cannot help thinking that he would have recognised a kindred spirit in at least some areas. This is not, perhaps, surprising: Barth and Edwards stood in the same, Reformed, tradition, although both (Barth probably more so) modified it in new and creative ways.

Beyond the similarity, however, differences present themselves. The first of these, I suggest, is that Edwards is more thoroughly Trinitarian in his discussion of the divine perfections than is Barth. To demonstrate this, I will explore briefly Barth's attempts to avoid nominalism in this area: in his first section on the divine perfections, Barth points to the theological relevance of the nominalism-realism debate, and suggests that it turns on this doctrine.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ C.D. II/1 pp.608-677.

¹²⁷ *ibid.* p.641.

¹²⁸ *ibid.* p.643.

¹²⁹ *ibid.* p.667.

¹³⁰ C.D. II/1 pp.325-335.

There are two basic errors to be avoided here. The extreme nominalist error, which Barth charges to Eunomius, Occam, Biel and Schleiermacher, is to view the divine perfections as in no sense divine, merely projections of human qualities on to a divine Being who Himself (the temptation at this point to write 'itself' is almost overpowering) is nothing but naked being.¹³¹ The opposite, realist, error is to hypostatise the perfections so that they are independent entities within, or above, the being of God. Against this Barth insists that there is no 'second, alien divinity in God'¹³² and that 'There are not first of all power, goodness, knowledge, will, etc. in general, and then in particular God also as one of the subjects to whom all these things accrue as a predicate.'¹³³

The mainstream of theological history, according to Barth, lies between these two, but is still flawed. Citing thinkers ranging from Irenaeus and John of Damascus to Thomas, Calvin and the Reformed orthodox, Barth recognised a desire to identify the divine perfections economically rather than immanently with God, *i.e.* to make knowledge of the perfections part of the accommodation of God to our understandings, denying that they are part of God's knowledge of Himself.¹³⁴ Thus there is a nominalistic tendency present, what Barth calls a 'partial nominalism',¹³⁵ which, he contends, must also be resisted.

The way forward Barth offers depends first on a recognition of the fundamental basis of the doctrine of God. The problem is one form of that of the One and the Many, and so calls for Trinitarian resolution: '...the fact that the idea of God was not determined by the doctrine of the Trinity, but that the latter was shaped by a general conception of God ... was now avenged at the most sensitive spot ... the idea of the divine simplicity was necessarily exalted to the all-controlling principle, the idol, which, devouring

¹³¹ *ibid.* p.327.

¹³² *ibid.* p.331.

¹³³ *ibid.* p.334.

¹³⁴ *ibid.* pp.327-330.

¹³⁵ *ibid.* p.330.

everything concrete, stands behind all these formulae ...'¹³⁶ Following this, Barth offers three 'explanatory propositions' in order to protect a correct statement.¹³⁷ Firstly, the diversity of the divine perfections belong to the being of the one God, and not to any second divine nature. Secondly, this diversity is a diversity of God's simple being - 'In God multiplicity, individuality and diversity do not stand in any contradiction to unity.'¹³⁸ Thirdly, this diversity of perfections is immanent and not merely economic.

Barth's fundamental insight - that the underlying problem here is a failure throughout the tradition to be rigorously Trinitarian whenever God is spoken of - is certainly sound. And the three propositions he advances are certainly adequate to the problem, if they can be held to constantly. My concern with the formulation, however, is the lack of any obvious connection between the fundamental insight and the propositions. If this really is a question of Trinitarian discourse, should it not be possible to derive those propositions which are necessary to an adequate statement from Trinitarian doctrine? Put another way, Barth proceeds by laying down boundary conditions. If it were possible, would not an answer formulated in Trinitarian terms that could be shown to lie within these boundary conditions be preferable? My contention here is that Jonathan Edwards offers just such an answer.

As so often, seemingly, with Edwards, it is a position offered in passing, *en route* to an answer to a different question. In a passage in the *Essay on the Trinity*, Edwards says this:

It is a maxim amongst divines that everything that is in God is God which must be understood of real attributes and not of meer (*sic*) modalities. If a man should tell me that the immutability of God is God, or that the omnipresence of God and authority of God, is God, I should not be able to think of any rational meaning of what he said ... But if it be meant that the *real* attributes of God, viz. His understanding and love are God, then what we have said may in some measure explain how it is so, for deity subsists in them distinctly; so they are distinct Divine persons.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ *ibid.* p.329; it is perhaps worth noting (particularly in view of my use of it in Ch.5 below!) that Barth certainly does not reject the doctrine of divine simplicity, but argues that it be understood aright, citing Augustine's phrases *multiplex simplicitas* and *simplex multiplicitas* - *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *ibid.* pp.330-335.

¹³⁸ *ibid.* p.332.

This dense passage contains several surprising features. Firstly, Edwards is uncompromising in his commitment to a serious Trinitarianism in the Cappadocian mould: the only available referents for the word 'God' are the 'distinct Divine persons'. The residue of a common 'essence' which was so pervasive in Western theological discourse is wholly absent, and Edwards claims to be unable to think of 'any rational meaning' behind the standard language that describes the essence.¹⁴⁰ Secondly, however, his approach is clearly that of a child of Augustine: the Trinity of the mind, the mind knowing itself/God and the mind loving itself/God is straight from the master's work, and so he does not fall into this century's characteristic error of assuming that the language of persons must have meant three minds, three knowledges and three wills, rather than three Persons with one perfect will and the rest. So, and thirdly, Edwards makes a striking move: the Father's perfections are only and precisely the Son and the Spirit. As noted earlier in this chapter, this is not an isolated statement, but occurs in *End of Creation* as well. With these passages in view, even Edwards' adoption of the classical language of the Reformed tradition in *Religious Affections* seems loaded:

there are two kinds of attributes in God, according to our way of conceiving him, his moral attributes, which are summed up in his holiness, and his natural attributes, of strength, knowledge, etc. that constitute the greatness of God; so there is a two-fold image of God in man, his moral or spiritual image, which is his holiness ... and God's natural image, consisting in men's reason and understanding, his natural ability, and dominion ...¹⁴¹

There is, then, in Edwards a move to subsume the doctrine of the divine perfections under the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁴² In this move we see that he takes with full seriousness the warnings in the tradition (that Barth claims the tradition itself was

¹³⁹ Helm (ed.) *op.cit.* p.119; my italics.

¹⁴⁰ The practice of discussing the attributes of God under the locus of the One God and so identifying them with God's essence was pervasive throughout scholasticisms both before and after the Reformation.

¹⁴¹ YE2 p.256; this passage is certainly less clear than those in the *Essay on the Trinity* and *End of Creation*, and it may be that Edwards moved away from traditional language towards the end of his life (a difficult contention to prove, since no more accurate date than later than 1727 has been offered for the *Essay* to the best of my knowledge - see Helm, ed. *op.cit.* p.5). However, reference may be made once again to the pervasiveness of the psychological analogies in the tradition, which would support a Trinitarian reading of this passage.

¹⁴² Edwards' 'Outline of "A Rational Account"' - a note indicating how he intended to arrange his projected Summa - is very brief, and too much should not be read in to it, but the line 'Trinity, and God's attributes' surely lends support to my reading. YE6 p.396.

unable to heed) that the perfections of God are truly the being of God - the position Barth is arguing for - and offers a way of understanding it built on the doctrine of the Trinity, gathering all the perfections of God up into the Son and the Spirit. Let me immediately say that this is radical within the tradition. The *quincumque vult*, after all, asserts that Father, Son and Spirit are alike all wise, yet there are not three that are all wise, but one, and even in Barth the assertion that the perfections belong to the one essence of God remains.¹⁴³ Yet once the move (resisted by Augustine) from psychological analogies to psychological accounts¹⁴⁴ had been made, Edwards' further move is an obvious one.

Obvious it may be, but is it valid? Given that the patristic doctrine never intended to suggest three centres of knowledge and will in its language of Three Persons,¹⁴⁵ the question becomes one of appropriation and perichoresis. Edwards is essentially seeking to appropriate different perfections of the divine *phusis* to particular *hypostases*. To the best of my knowledge, this is a move unique in the tradition, a radical extension of the doctrine of appropriation (which classically refers to the *ad extra* acts of the Trinity). I suspect that, provided the doctrine of perichoresis is remembered and asserted, a form of this move could be developed that would not damage Trinitarian theology in any fundamental way, but Edwards did not live to do this, and it is impossible to say how he would have aligned these ideas with his broader Trinitarian theology, or indeed whether questions like those raised above would have led him to abandon them. He offers, however, the beginnings of a way to formalise what Barth merely asserts: that only by a thoroughgoing re-appropriation of the fundamentally Trinitarian nature of Christian theism can a satisfactory doctrine of the divine perfections be offered; which is almost to say that this is the only route to a

¹⁴³ C.D. II/1 pp.322-350 *passim*.

¹⁴⁴ By 'psychological accounts' I mean the attempt to project the analogies found in the mind of humanity back into the life of God. With Augustine's psychological analogies in place, this is an obvious move, invited by the Biblical language of *Logos* - rationality, idea - and Wisdom (and indeed Love, if Augustine's identification of the Spirit with Love is accepted). This is particularly the case if the Puritan faculty psychology is adopted - although to what extent this was derived from this sort of Trinitarian account is a historical question I am not competent to answer.

¹⁴⁵ On this see Prestige, G.L. *God in Patristic Thought* S.P.C.K., London, 1952 pp.242-264, especially pp.263-264, where a passage of Ps.-Cyril which John of Damascus incorporated into *The Orthodox Faith* is referred to: 'There is ... one ousia, one goodness, one power, one will, one energy, one authority; one and identical; not three similar to each other, but a single identical motion of the three hypostaseis ... the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in every respect one entity, save for

satisfactory doctrine of God, within the Reformed tradition, given the centrality of the discussion of the divine perfections within the doctrine of God in most Reformed dogmatics.

So, a comparison with Barth demonstrates both a common inheritance in the Reformed tradition and the strength of Edwards' Trinitarian re-working, but a third comparison may be made, and one that is more central to my thesis: apparently Barth is not prepared to let this language of glory take centre stage when he comes to discuss the 'end of creation'. Rather, he returns to his basic statement concerning God, 'the One who loves in freedom', and so brings the doctrine of election into the doctrine of God in order to speak of those God is free to love.¹⁴⁶

This bare assertion needs some care, since Barth's whole account of the divine perfections has been an attempt to spell out the content of the statement 'the One who loves in freedom,' and the language of glory lies at the beginning and end of that attempt. For Edwards, however, language of glory is language of God's primal decision, whereas for Barth language of glory is a description of God's nature. God's primal decision, by contrast, which is definitive of who God is, is the decree of election, which is both an inner-Trinitarian event (Jesus Christ, elected and electing) and a movement outward in loving freedom to the creation.

Once again however, care is needed: this primal decision, for Barth, is God's self-definition and so this must be what gives content to the doctrine of the divine perfections – and the language of glory is the summary of these perfections. The conclusion is surprising, but difficult to avoid, that Barth could have spoken of divine glorification as God's primal decision without materially changing his doctrine. Indeed, when we read the account of the divine election of grace, language of glory is often present.¹⁴⁷

ingeneracy and generation and procession.' Prestige argues that this is a summary of the position held by the Greek Fathers from Origen, citing Athanasius and the Cappadocians in particular.

¹⁴⁶ C.D. II/2 pp.3-93.

This is a difficult place to reach. A comparison with Barth has found more similarities than differences, and yet it is undeniable that Edwards' theology and Barth's feel very different. The reason I will suggest for this will point to the heart of my critique of Edwards, but in order to introduce it clearly, a second, briefer comparison is required. Hans Urs von Balthasar, who of course was a friend of Karl Barth as well as a significant Roman Catholic theologian, places categories of beauty and glory right at the centre of his thought. Once again, there is no evidence that von Balthasar ever read Edwards, but echoes can be heard.

von Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord*¹⁴⁸ is the first part of a massive trilogy, but has thus far been seen as the most significant of his writings. In it, he attempts to restore aesthetics to its place within theological thought – arguing that the beautiful should find its place alongside the good and the true as the appropriate object of Christian discourse.¹⁴⁹ It would be impossible to do justice to the sweep of von Balthasar's thought in a few paragraphs here, but the key discussion of the last two volumes of this work will highlight the point I am interested to make. These volumes present a powerful and original Biblical theology, vol.6 on *The Old Covenant* and vol.7 on *The New Covenant*. In them, von Balthasar shows the disintegration of the old notion of divine glory during and after the exile, which established the possibility for a radically new concept, gathering up the broken pieces and re-forging them in a hitherto inconceivable way.

The Old Testament records a journey out of paganism, a journey from an unreflective vision of what 'glory' might mean to the verge of a new and unlooked-for possibility. The fundamental basis for this journey is God's revelation, but that also provides the most intractable problem: God's glory, as it is perceived by His people is marked above all by dialectic, not to say contradiction. Whichever way the subject is looked at, we are forced to speak of both 'knowing and not knowing', 'seeing and not seeing', of a 'dazzling darkness'.¹⁵⁰ This is because the divine glory spoken of in the

¹⁴⁷ A glance at the index to *C.D.* II/2 will perhaps make this point best, but see especially pp.169-170, where election is explicitly identified with the overflowing of God's inner glory.

¹⁴⁸ von Balthasar, Hans Urs *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (7 vols) tr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis; ed. Joseph Fessio and John Riches T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1982-1989

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* vol.1 p.9.

¹⁵⁰ All titles of sections taken from vol. VI pp.37-41.

Scripture is itself an attempt by the Hebrew theologians who were the redactors of the Biblical books to make sense of the apparently incompatible witnesses to God's revelation that are contained in the earlier traditions.¹⁵¹

God's glory attains its most concrete form in the creature, particularly the human creature, created in God's image, and in the covenant-history of Israel. In both creation and covenant God is active in giving His creatures space; but the creature uses that space to reject God. Now one of von Balthasar's basic commitments comes into play: this history is not merely history, but, as Biblical history, has a decisive and distinctive shape as that which reveals God's revelation, God's glory.¹⁵² This commitment, however, poses a problem: the revelation of God's glory under this scheme is overwhelmingly a story of God's rejection, of the breaking of His covenant and the apostasy of His people. The prophets provide glimpses of what obedience should be, but still, the history is one of disobedience, and so the liturgy of the *Lamentations* has a peculiar place in that history: here, Israel prays as the people from whom the Lord has departed, and so the prayers end, not with affirmation, but with question 'Or hast thou utterly rejected us? Art thou exceedingly angry with us?'¹⁵³

At this point, von Balthasar turns to consider Job, who knows this experience of being forsaken by God. In his case, however, it is not a result of unfaithfulness, and so Job allows the question to be asked: could it be that God's glory will be revealed even in the destruction of His temple, in the exile and shame of His people? Could there be a new way of conceiving God's glory that will gather up the shattered remains? The vocation of the anonymous prophet whose words are recorded in Isaiah 40-55 is to give an affirmative answer to such questions.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ So, for example, p.53.

¹⁵² This is the content of von Balthasar's *argumentum ex prophetia* in the concluding pages of vol.VI, for example.

¹⁵³ Lamentations 5:22, so von Balthasar vol.VI p.280; some modern translations turn these questions into statements, but the Hebrew at least admits the standard reading.

¹⁵⁴ For better or worse, von Balthasar accepts most of the standard critical results concerning the composition of the Old Testament: Isaiah is treated as three books, rather than one, and the Pentateuch is analysed through unraveling J, D, E and P. In his treatment of the Saul narrative, however, he insists that the final redaction is what must be interpreted (VI.226). This suggests a degree of inconsistency.

The literature dating from after the return of the exiles (in which von Balthasar includes Trito-Isaiah and Daniel, as well as those books usually regarded as apocryphal by Protestant churches) demonstrates the attempt of an abandoned people to rediscover God's glory in their own situation, with the *shekinah* gone from the temple; the king gone from the land, and the Word gone from the prophets. There are three parallel attempts: a renewed prophecy, seeking to predict the immediate coming of the messianic glory of God; a retreat into the mysticism of apocalyptic, which discounted the historical experience of God's people as something shadowy and irrelevant; and a wisdom tradition seeking glory in all of creation and in danger of syncretism.¹⁵⁵ These attempts were doomed to failure, but were necessary to show the impossibility of the synthesis of the fragments that were all that was left of the vision of God's glory.

Turning to the New Testament, von Balthasar sees all these fragments gathered up, and the old prophetic tradition renewed for the last time, in the person of John the Baptist.¹⁵⁶ This gathering up, however, is only for the purposes of handing over, and it is Jesus, the Incarnate Son, who is the final revelation of the astonishing synthesis of His glory that is the final and decisive determinant of what it means to be God. Political messianism finds its fulfilment in the Suffering Servant; the unveiling of that which is truly apocalyptic happens not in war in the heavens, but in the humble death on the tree; the wisdom of the world is confronted with God's foolishness. In Jesus, all the old expectations of what 'glory' should have meant are fulfilled, but they are transformed in their fulfilling. Von Balthasar can speak for himself on this point:

What God's glory in its good truth is, was to be revealed in Jesus Christ, and ultimately in his absolute obedience of Cross and Hell. The unique ray of the divine majesty of love is to become visible from the unique momentum of this event, establishing the norm for everything that can lay claim to the predicate 'glorious', at whatever distance and periphery it may be. From here sentence and judgement are passed on everything that calls itself *δοξα* in the sphere of creation ... Inasmuch as the central event, Christ's obedience unto death, is no myth but the final self-revelation of God in history, all other glory is 'demythologised' by it...¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Listed in summary in Vol. VI p.303, and discussed at some length in the pages afterwards.

¹⁵⁶ Vol. VII pp.40-54.

¹⁵⁷ Vol. VII p.243.

Biblical language of glory includes, indeed centres on, that of the fourth gospel, and so the cross must be seen as the fundamental locus of God's self-glorification. This dimension, clearly present in Barth's account of election, is notable by its absence in Edwards' *End of Creation*. So my discussion of von Balthasar forces a return to the question I am asking of Edwards, borrowed from Luther's criticism of the *theologia gloriae* at Heidelberg: 'He deserves to be called a theologian ... who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.'¹⁵⁸ Under this condition, does Edwards 'deserve to be called a theologian'?

¹⁵⁸ Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, Thesis 20. In *Works* (ed. Helmut H. Lehmann) vol.31: *The Career of the Reformer I* p.40.

Chapter 3

No Creature so Small and Abject:

The Display of God's Glory in the Created Order

If thy heart were sincere and upright, then every creature would be unto thee a looking-glass of life, and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and abject that it representeth not the goodness of God.

Thomas a Kempis, The Imitation of Christ II.IV.1

The previous chapter introduced a separation between the 'how' and the 'why' questions concerning creation, which I acknowledged to be artificial at the time. In this chapter this artificiality must become explicit: if the 'why' question is correctly answered, then that answer must be visible in the 'how' question – put another way, the being of creation must be affected by its purpose. Not just the heavens, as the psalmist insists, but every created being and every moment of created history must declare the glory of God, or Edwards' account as described in the last chapter cannot be accepted. The purpose – the end – of creation in its entirety and in its detail is to give glory to God through promoting the knowledge and love of God in His intelligent creatures. If any part of creation, or any moment of history, is not able to serve this end, then it has no reason to be – and so God would not have created it.

So, on his own terms, Edwards must show that creation glorifies God. Without doubt, he rose to this challenge: *Images and Shadows of Divine Things*¹ shows him finding 'sermons in stones' as ardently as any sixteenth century Puritan (or playwright); and the *Notes on the Apocalypse*² demonstrate the parallel attempt to read contemporary history into the Biblical narrative. These are merely the two clearest examples of a recurrent practice: again and again in his writings, Edwards sought to uncover the

¹ *YE11* pp.49-142; the two subtitles that Edwards attached to this notebook perhaps make the point even more forcefully: 'The Book of Nature and Common Providence' and 'The Language and Lessons of Nature'; see *YE11* p.50.

² *YE5* pp.95-305. This volume is edited by S.J. Stein, who appears to feel the need to apologise in his introduction for Edwards' practices in this direction: 'The book of Revelation fascinated Jonathan Edwards ... a fact that has been a source of bewilderment and embarrassment to some students of American thought ... This volume does not promise to raise Edwards' intellectual or religious stock...' *YE5* p.1.

moral meaning that his teleological commitments told him must be present in God's creation.³

Of course, these examples merely demonstrate Edwards' Puritan heritage,⁴ a heritage that held to the 'medieval' assumption that the cosmos had a rationality that could provide uncomplicated access to the mind of God. Here at least it would appear that Edwards' thought is uninformed by, or in direct opposition to, the coming Enlightenment. Certainly, Edwards engaged with enthusiasm in the Puritan games of tracing the outcome of Biblical prophecies in the history of his own day, and of seeking providential words from God in the events of nature, and part of the purpose of this chapter is to ask whether these practices were, in the final analysis, simply pre-Enlightenment anachronisms, or whether the suggestion that Edwards recast Puritan theology in a form that could stand up to its Enlightened (cultured?) despisers can be supported even in these most 'medieval' areas of his thought. Living in a time of change, did Edwards' theology merely avoid that change, or engage with it?

The key shift here is a change in the perceived comprehensibility of the world. Grossly oversimplifying, the medieval assumption was that the world was morally, rather than mathematically, comprehensible – that, as the good creation of God, the world should reflect the goodness and the authority of its Creator. Modern thought, in contrast, assumed (and assumes) that the world should reflect mathematical order, but denied (and denies) the possibility of finding moral meaning in particular events.⁵ An earthquake was a bizarre and unusual happening to the medieval mind (to use a sweeping generalisation), and could (indeed, should) be read as an expression of God's displeasure. Modern thought, coming to maturity in the Enlightenment, sought to see the world as comprehensible mathematically: physical events followed certain

³ Throughout this chapter, I will be speaking of moral and teleological dimensions of creation as interchangeable; whilst this need not always be the case, it is within the terms of Edwards' thought as outlined in the last chapter.

⁴ One does not need to look far in Puritan literature to find attempts to impose a Biblical metanarrative on the world they inhabited; the pictures of New England as the New Israel and the 'City on the hill' provide obvious examples.

⁵ 'Descartes, for example, denied that final causes are operative in nature; and modern [*i.e.* classical] physics was based on the presupposition that final causes are not operative in nature.' Foster, M.B. 'The Christian Doctrine of Creation and the Rise of Modern Natural Science' in Russell, Colin A. (ed.) *Science and Religious Belief: A Selection of Recent Historical Studies* University of London Press, London, 1973 pp.294-315 for the article and p.295 for the quotation.

laws of nature, best expressed in mathematical terms, and could not be invested with moral significance: an earthquake was a result of natural processes, which were inevitable and amoral – stones could not be held responsible for their actions, after all.⁶ Perhaps the most graphic illustration of this movement was indeed an earthquake – in Lisbon, in 1755. The change in responses that I am describing can be traced in the various responses to this disaster, as the clergy sought to insist that it was a terrible warning of God's judgement, and the *philosophes* scoffed at such superstition and preferred to speculate about subterranean fire and other possible causes.⁷

If this description is accurate, then already Edwards appears to be unusual: he will not fit into this either-or, but rather insists that the world is comprehensible both physically and morally.⁸ Following his early reading of Newton, Edwards produced a cluster of writings on the borders of natural science and metaphysics – borders which were not so sharply drawn in the day, of course – which assert the physical rationality of the created order, and that in mathematical terms, but deny the underlying picture of a 'world-machine'.⁹ If this position can be successfully held, then it makes possible an account of creation that permits moral rationality whilst accepting natural

⁶ Some conclusions of Keith Thomas in his classic study *Religion and the Decline of Magic* are pertinent here: '... the religion which survived the decline of magic was not the religion of Tudor England. When the Devil was banished to Hell, God himself was confined to working through natural causes. "Special providences" ... gave way to the notion of a Providence which itself obeyed natural laws accessible to human study ... Theologians were now more ready [sic] to accept the frequency of unmerited suffering ... The achievement of natural theology was to effect a final break in the association between guilt and misfortune which had been integral to so many of the primitive beliefs we have considered. The mechanical philosophy of the later seventeenth century could then be comfortably reconciled with orthodox religious teaching...' (Thomas, Keith *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973; pp.765-766).

⁷ The best-known example is Voltaire's *Candide*, which satirises both approaches. Pangloss is found amongst the ruins of Lisbon speculating about underground lava, and is then burnt as a heretic because the Jesuits feel that an *auto da fe* is the obvious response to the disaster. For further responses, and some worthwhile analysis, see Kendrick, T. D. *The Lisbon Earthquake* Methuen, London, 1956.

⁸ This attempt was common enough in the day; Kendrick (*ibid.*) describes many clergy who wanted to speak of God working through the physical order, even as it was described by the new natural science. There is little evidence, however, that any of them were aware of the philosophical questions such a practice raised. The final position available within this simple morphology, denying both forms of comprehensibility, is characteristic of late (or post-) modernity, of course.

⁹ Such 'theistic Newtonianism' was not an unusual position amongst early readers of Newton. See Gay, Peter *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (2 vols) Vol.2: *The Science of Freedom* W.W. Norton, London, 1977 (originally published 1969) pp. 140-145 for some indications of the rise and decline of the movement; also, Anderson's comments in *YE6* p.58 for the direct influence on Edwards.

science;¹⁰ an account of creation, that is, in which the creation itself can still be a locus for God's self-glorification. Edwards attempted to give content to this by an appropriation of the tradition of typological exegesis, a move that will form the subject of the latter part of this chapter. I will begin, however, with an exploration of the metaphysics Edwards developed in response to Newton.

3.1 Edwards' Metaphysics, or 'Calvinism and Hobbes'

Central to the recent revival of interest in Edwards has been the recognition of the importance of his early reading of Locke and Newton.¹¹ In the present context, with Edwards' Enlightened credentials in question, it is important to note the central importance of Locke and, particularly, Newton for the nascent Enlightenment. Peter Gay's interpretation of the movement¹² offers eloquent testimony: lists of the 'greatest men in history' which inevitably featured Newton and Locke, and then added either Bacon or Leibniz abounded;¹³ in referring to Newton, 'the adjectives "divine" and "immortal" became virtually compulsory',¹⁴ and these examples could be multiplied many times over. This given, a credible restatement of Reformed theology, particularly in the Anglophone world, would have to take seriously these two thinkers.¹⁵

¹⁰ In Foster's terms (see n.5 *supra*), a modern physics that accepts the possibility (and the actuality) of final causes – a restatement that should make clear the radical nature of the enterprise! An interesting theological dislocation is visible here: Foster's argument is that the doctrine of creation that was operative in the early modern period provided the intellectual basis for natural science – the same natural science that demanded a denial of the doctrine of providence. One of the happy results of Edwards' unusual language of 'continuous creation' (which will be considered in more detail later) is the insistence that creation and providence are inextricably linked, and so the refusal to countenance this particular systematic dislocation.

¹¹ See my comments on this in chapter 1 pp.35-37.

¹² Gay, *op.cit.*

¹³ *ibid.* p.130.

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.131.

¹⁵ An illustration of this assertion can be found in Samuel Johnson's letters to Berkeley (Samuel Johnson the tutor at Yale, not the English Johnson whose appreciation of philosophy seems, for all his brilliance, to have reached no higher than his famous 'refutation' of Berkeley for Boswell). The first difficulty that Johnson raises with Berkeley's philosophy is 'its repugnancy to and subversion of Sir I. Newton's philosophy in sundry points; to which [some] have been so much attached that they can't suffer themselves in the least to call it in question in any instance...' See Berkeley's *Works* II pp.265-294 for the correspondence, and p.272 for the particular quotation.

Edwards' interaction with Locke is well known and has been extensively commented on, at least in relation to his religious psychology in defence of the Awakening.¹⁶ His reading of Newton, whilst regularly noticed, has occasioned less theological interest.¹⁷ Whilst (self-confessedly) not a mathematician,¹⁸ Edwards read Newton with alertness, and his metaphysical refutation of materialism can be considered to start from a slight ambivalence in Newton's writings, the refusal to speculate on the nature of gravitational attraction.¹⁹ As a result of this, Gay comments, 'Leibniz charged that Newton had reintroduced the old, discredited notion of the scholastic occult qualities, with his mysterious doctrine of gravitation; [and] that Newton had converted the physical career of the world into a perpetual miracle...'²⁰ The young Jonathan Edwards, with a very different purpose in view from the *philosophes*, seized on the same point in his scientific writings in order to prove Leibniz's charge to be precisely true. Gravity, and indeed the preservation of all bodies in existence moment by moment, was nothing other than an immediate action of God.²¹ Here, Edwards recognised, along with other theistic Newtonians,²² was an adequate answer to the then popular materialism that derived from Hobbes.

The refutation of materialism was seen by many in the early eighteenth century to be a pressing apologetic task, and Edwards devoted himself to it in his early writings.²³ Whilst this aim is tangential to my main thesis, the writings that address it are important, and so a brief history of the controversy is appropriate.²⁴ Hobbes' assertion that only matter was genuine substance²⁵ could not be accepted, but

¹⁶ Beginning, at least in the recent renewal of interest, with Perry Miller's study; I will discuss this further in chapter 4 below when I consider Edwards' account of conversion.

¹⁷ The only significant account to sustain a recognition of Newton's influence that I am aware of is, once again, Jenson's *America's Theologian*; see especially pp.23-30.

¹⁸ See 'Cover-Leaf Memoranda' from the *Natural Philosophy* Notebook no.16: 'Always ... to acknowledge my ignorance in mathematics...' YE6 p.194.

¹⁹ Famously, 'I frame no hypotheses' 'General Scholium' to the *Principia*.

²⁰ *op.cit.* p.143.

²¹ Anderson argues that Edwards developed his theories largely on the basis of the concept of gravitation. YE6 pp.45-47.

²² Notably Richard Bentley; see Anderson's footnote in YE6 p.234 n.5.

²³ See YE6 p.54, where Anderson asserts 'he consciously undertook to develop a metaphysics that would be a conclusive answer to materialism.'

²⁴ For a fuller account, see Anderson's Introduction to YE6 pp.1-143, and especially pp.52-136. The present discussion owes much to Anderson, whose work will, I suspect, prove to be near-definitive.

²⁵ According to *Leviathan* I.4, 'incorporeal substance' is merely an 'insignificant sound', like 'round quadrangle'.

resonated with the times. The failure of scholastic accounts of substance was everywhere accepted, and the rising popularity of atomism made materialist accounts seem attractive. The reactions were various, but generally based on some form of dualism. The reality of matter went uncontested (the influence of atomism), but attempts were made to prove that it was not the only reality.²⁶ An alternative approach sought to demonstrate that the existence of matter was contingent – for example, Henry More’s argument that its basis is infinite necessary space.²⁷

However, both these approaches have problems that centre on the issue of causation. If causation is held to operate only within a substance-world, then the mental and spiritual world can have no effect upon the material world,²⁸ and its separate reality is of little relevance. If, in contrast, causation operates across substance-worlds, then the one undoubted philosophical success of the day, the discovery of regular universal scientific laws, is placed in jeopardy. Faced with this dilemma, English philosophy found a different route, not so much around the problem as away from it altogether: the empiricism of Locke and Newton ceased to build physics on the problematic basis of metaphysics, and sought to build it on observation instead. The world-machine was seen to work; and whether I can explain why or not, I can describe the laws by which it operates.²⁹ This way forward, of course, is an open invitation to return to materialism: belief in the ‘world-machine’, does not prevent belief in ‘spiritual substance,’ just so long as it has no effect on matter, including our own bodies. So Berkeley, who saw all this with uncommon clarity: ‘Matter once allow’d, I defy any man to prove that God is not matter.’³⁰

²⁶ So Descartes seeks to demonstrate the separate realities of his body and his mind – *Meditations* 6.

²⁷ See Copleston’s *History of Philosophy* vol.V p.64. More was a significant influence on Edwards, and some similarities in thought can be discovered – *YE6* p.54.

²⁸ The ‘Two clocks’ theory of Geulincx, a Dutch Cartesian is a good example. Consider two clocks, wound up and set so that one strikes the hour when the other shows it. The two events are simultaneous, determined and unconnected. So it is, according to this theory, with body and soul, which have been so ordered by God that a volitional impulse to lift my left arm is co-incident with the physical movement of my arm – but has no causal effect upon that movement. See Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy* pp.583-584.

²⁹ The success of this programme was sufficient to delay the widespread acceptance of Hume’s recognition that observation is a basis at least as problematic as metaphysics. The failure of the Kantian project to find an answer to this is at least a part of the cause of the widespread disruptions in modernity in recent years.

Against this background, Edwards begins his analysis of matter in a short work entitled *Of Atoms*.³¹ The essence of an atom, he argues, is not size but solidity, as any body that cannot be broken is, by definition, atomic. A body cannot be broken if it is perfectly uniform, since there is no point where it is weaker than any other, so applied force will result in it breaking at every point simultaneously, and so total annihilation, or no fracture at all. Edwards believes annihilation through applied force to be an absurdity, and so suggests atoms are preserved by an infinite power, which is to say an immediate action of God. The eleventh corollary to this discussion asserts that 'it follows that the certain unknown substance, which philosophers used to think subsisted by itself, and stood underneath and kept up solidity and all other properties, which they used to say it was impossible for a man to have an idea of, is ... nothing but the Deity acting in that particular manner in those parts of space where he thinks fit.'³²

So, Edwards points out, the so-called 'laws of nature' are merely descriptions of God's usual ways of acting – causation, after all, by supposition of the materialists themselves, has its roots in substance.³³ This argument will also serve as a proof of God's existence – or rather (Edwards is careful in his choice of words) a proof of 'the being, infinite power, and omnipresence of God.'³⁴ Edwards' next attempt at sustained natural philosophy, *Of Being*,³⁵ returns to the attempt to demonstrate the being of God, with an interesting version of the ontological argument. It is impossible for us to conceive of absolute nothingness, asserts Edwards; indeed, such a state would be the basic contradiction, since it is in relation to non-being that we demonstrate all other contradictions.³⁶ So, since nothing, or non-being, is a

³⁰ *Works* vol.I p.77.

³¹ *YE6* pp.208-218.

³² *ibid.* p.215. For a discussion of the influence of More and Locke on Edwards' argument at this point see Anderson's Introduction pp.63-66.

³³ Edwards is careful here and in other places where he follows a similar train of argument to insist that it applies only to material substance.

³⁴ Corol. 7, p.214.

³⁵ *YE6* pp.202-207; again, Anderson's discussion is illuminating; pp.68-75.

³⁶ 'absolute nothing is the aggregate of all the absurd contradictions in the world, a state wherein there is neither body, nor spirit, nor space: neither empty space nor full space, neither little nor great, ... neither infinitely great space nor finite space, nor a mathematical point ... a state wherein every proposition in Euclid is not true, nor any of those self-evident maxims by which they are demonstrated; and all other eternal truths are neither true nor false.' *YE6* p.206.

contradiction, something, or 'being' must exist eternally.³⁷ Thus Edwards attempts not to demonstrate the existence of the greatest conceivable being, but simply that of being. Existence exists; to assert otherwise is meaningless.³⁸

Edwards includes several attempts to state this argument, suggesting perhaps that he was not entirely happy with it. Its validity is not really an issue here, but Edwards' point is not so ridiculous as it might at first sight seem: 'no-thing' is a relational term, even if that relation is one of negation. It is meaningless without a prior concept (and hence, in Edwards' terms, existence) of 'thing'. Perhaps a (thoroughly Edwardsean) mathematical illustration will help: in a recent article on the nature of zero, Ian Stewart comments ' "Nothing" is – well, nothing. A void. Total absence of thingness. Zero, however, is definitely a thing. It is a number. It is, in fact, the number you get when you count your oranges and you haven't got any.'³⁹ According to Edwards 'nothing' is just as much a thing as 'zero' is a number, the ontology of the non-existent oranges is just as real as their quantity.

This argument, if it works at all, must work equally well at all times and places, so 'being' must be eternal (or at least omnitemporaneous; Edwards seems to assume that the latter implies the former) and omnipresent.⁴⁰ So, just as *Of Atoms* argued for the existence of that which is omnipresent and omnipotent, *Of Being* argues for being which is omnipresent and eternal. All that remains, as with any attempted proof of the existence of God, is the identification of what has been proved with God who is

³⁷ As an afterthought, Edwards proposes a second demonstration of this position, arguing that the question 'can absolute nothing be?' is itself a contradiction, since the being of anything is incompatible with a state of absolute nothingness. *YE6* p.207.

³⁸ Edwards seemed both to be impressed by this argument, and to be unsatisfied by his statements of it, as he tried several times during his life to restate it in a better form. In *Miscellanies* 650 (Townsend, p.82), he offers a construction turning on the assertion 'if anyone says there may be nothing he supposes at the same time that nothing has a being...'. In *Miscellanies* 880 (Townsend, pp.87-103) he attempts a more carefully logical version: '[t]here is a reason to be given why God should have a Being. The reason is because there is no other way. There is nothing else supposable, to be put with the Being of God as the other part of the disjunction. If there be it is absolute and universal Nothing. A supposition of something is a supposition of the being of God ... God is the sum of all being and there is no being without his being ... But there is no such thing supposable, as an absolute universal nothing. We talk nonsense when we suppose any such thing...'.

³⁹ Ian Stewart, 'Zero, Zilch and Zip' *New Scientist* 2131 (25th April 1998) pp.41-44.

⁴⁰ *YE6* p.202.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The distance remaining is perhaps best measured by the assertion Edwards makes at this point: 'space is God.'⁴¹

The remainder of *Of Being* dates from some time later, and elaborates arguments which Edwards first introduces in a *Miscellanies* entry, pp.⁴² 'We know that there was being from eternity,' Edwards begins, 'and this being must be intelligent.' Must, because existence depends on being known. The reasons offered in the *Miscellanies* entry are elaborated in the latter part of *Of Being*, where the example of a universe without intelligent beings is offered: 'I demand in what respect this world has a being, but only in the divine consciousness. Certainly in no respect. There would be figures and magnitudes, and motions and proportions – but where? Where else but in the Almighty's knowledge.'⁴³ And so, he goes on to argue, with colours and sounds and temperatures – all existence is only in being perceived – *esse est percipi*.⁴⁴

Anderson, in his discussion of Edwards' philosophical development, links this to the theme of this thesis.⁴⁵ He argues that Edwards reaches this position (*esse est percipi*) through reflection on two early assumptions: firstly, that religion was the highest purpose of the universe (an early position in the discussion of teleology I outlined in the previous chapter); and secondly that the essence of religion was knowledge of God. Of particular note is *Miscellanies* gg⁴⁶ where Edwards argues that the universe must have a purpose, and that purpose is the religion of intelligent beings – so that the role of the intelligent creation in glorifying God is the teleological focus of creation. Add to this Edwards' constant assumption (which I will explore later in this chapter) that God may be known through appropriate contemplation of the creation, and the position that the creation exists in order to be known by intelligent beings is secure. Thus we can see that Edwards' much-vaunted idealism depends in part on the teleological interest which is the focus of this study.

⁴¹ *ibid.* p.203.

⁴² *YE13* p.188; for dating details see Anderson's introduction to *YE6* and, for a summary of the results, Schafer's Table of Dates in *YE13* pp.91-109.

⁴³ *YE6* p.204.

⁴⁴ I will address the obvious, and much-discussed, similarities with Berkeley below.

⁴⁵ *YE6* pp.77-80.

⁴⁶ *YE13* p.185.

Edwards' interest in this sort of metaphysics seems to have declined, but one can imagine how this position would develop if built on his mature account of the purpose of creation. Firstly, creatures' knowledge of God is participation in God's own knowledge of Himself, so Edwards would have been able to incorporate God's own knowledge of creation as a key point in the argument, a move that is clearly necessary if the argument is to work. Secondly, it is not just the creatures' knowledge of creation that is its purpose (*i.e.* that brings God glory) it is also the creatures' delight in creation, and so Edwards' assertion that to be is to be known would have to become 'to be is to be known and loved'; *esse est percipi et amari* – a position offering significant possibilities of developing a relational ontology similar to those current in this century, and built finally on Trinitarian grounds.

I left Edwards' version of the ontological argument in *Of Being* with the unpromising assertion 'space is God'. A way forward from here is now available: 'Space' – the substratum wherein things 'move and have their being', where the possibility of existence is available – is indeed God. To be precise, it is the mind of God, apart from whose knowledge nothing can exist.⁴⁷ Material things are objective, are other than each other, because God knows them to be so, because that is how God thinks of them, and His faithfulness is the only guarantor (and the only one needed) of that. In the more developed form of this metaphysics I have postulated, the creation exists through being known and loved by God, and so the Father holds the creation in being through His Son and His Spirit. Edwards, it seems, opened the possibility for a post-Newtonian restatement of the orthodox doctrine of creation first developed by Irenaeus. Leibniz's accusation – that Newton made the 'career of the world into a perpetual miracle' – seems abundantly justified, as do the fears that presumably lay behind it, that Newton's thought might be used by some in the Church to oppose, rather than support, the nascent Enlightenment in its rejection of theistic religion.

The serious question raised by this account is the nature of material reality: for too much of Christian history, the attitude to matter that the Gnostics learnt from Greek

philosophy has prevailed, and material being has been denigrated, if not actually regarded as necessarily evil. The credal confession of the 'resurrection of the body' is a check on this tendency, but is also in constant danger of being replaced by a belief in the immortality of the soul. An idealist philosophy such as Edwards' would seem at first sight to be in particular danger of falling into this trap. Edwards does not. He clearly and unambiguously asserts the goodness of created material reality, and it is in fact precisely his so-called idealism that enables him to do this. 'To be without the body,' he insists at one point, whilst considering the intermediate state between death and resurrection, 'is in it self [*sic*] an evil because tis a want of that which the soul of man naturally inclines to and desires...'.⁴⁸ This relies on the critique of the Enlightenment: for the Enlightened, the fundamental ontological and noetic distinction lay between spirit and matter. This given, it is incontrovertible that God is spirit, and so the natural tendency for any (Enlightened) theist is to denigrate matter. Even for a non-theist, the heights of human achievement are spiritual (art, for instance), and so the same temptation is present.

Edwards, however, has cut through this dualism, and returned to the fundamental ontological insight of Irenaeus and Athanasius: the only relevant ontological distinction that can be made is between creature and creator. In an (unpublished) *Miscellanies* entry, number 777, Edwards discusses the progressive nature of heaven's joys (I will return to his celebration of temporality later in this chapter, but in passing this is further evidence for the ontological points I am making, as temporality tends in the tradition to be linked to materiality as marks of ontological provisionality). His argument begins with a rousing assertion that the relevant ontological gap is between creatures and the Creator, as he insists that only Christ fully knows God, and that all other creatures depend on 'means or ... manifestations or signs held forth.' The fundamental sign is, of course, the Incarnate One who bridges the gap, but my point in mentioning this argument is to notice what Edwards will not say: it is not our material natures that prevent us knowing God fully, or even our sin; it is our being as creatures. The same assertion of an ontological, and so noetic gap between creature and Creator occurs in a much later entry, *Miscellanies* 1358, where Edwards asserts that '...we

⁴⁷ A similar argument, based on more recent science, can be found in Torrance, T.F. *Space, Time and Incarnation* T.&T.Clark, Edinburgh, 1997. See particularly p.12.

can have no other proper manifestations of the divine nature, but by some effects of it: for we cant [*sic*] immediately look upon and behold God & see what he is intuitively.' Even Scripture, according to Edwards, is only a testimony to God's works: 'The word declares, but the works are the proper evidence of what is declared.' He goes on to insist that we can know God through His mighty works: creation, providence, redemption, regeneration, final judgement, and others. These, however, are all works attributed to Christ in the Scriptures, and so again, we know God only through Christ, because the ontological gap is between creature and Creator, not the Enlightenment dualism of matter and spirit.

It is perhaps appropriate at this point to step back and survey the argument so far. Edwards developed a metaphysical system which found not just gravitation, as Leibnitz feared, but the very solidity, reality, and permanence of the physical world to be 'merely' thoughts in the mind of God.⁴⁹ In doing so, he answered a central question of the philosophy of the day, concerning the nature of 'substance', the thing which 'stood underneath and kept up solidity and all other properties...'.⁵⁰ Edwards argued that, in these terms, the only proper substance is God, who only can give permanence and reality to the world. Any other answer will eventually insist on something else that is *a se*, which can exist of itself without reference to God.⁵¹ Edwards' answer, then, is surely the only appropriately Christian answer, if the question is framed in these terms,⁵² and shows that it is precisely this Christian answer that can avoid the denigration of matter. More than this, however: by making the movement of bodies under Newton's physics 'a perpetual miracle', Edwards does establish the possibility of a natural science that is not inimical to moral meaning in creation, and hence to teleology.

⁴⁸ *Miscellanies* 644 (as yet unpublished).

⁴⁹ 'Merely'! What could be a greater basis of being than to be known and loved by God?

⁵⁰ *YE6* p.215.

⁵¹ That is to say, any other answer will finally deny the key Christian affirmation of *creatio ex nihilo*.

⁵² Although it is at least arguable that this is an unhelpful way to frame the question.

Edwards makes a third early assault on ontological questions, one that he did sustain into his later life, in the various entries in the *Notes on the Mind*.⁵³ This begins with an aesthetic analysis of the nature of 'excellency': 'One alone, without any reference to any more, cannot be excellent; for in such a case there can be no manner of relation no way, and therefore, no such thing as consent.'⁵⁴ Beauty consists only in relationship; one alone *cannot* be excellent.⁵⁵ All excellency consists in relational categories such as harmony, symmetry and proportion. Edwards analyses this in relation to the physical world, exploring how all physical beauty is reducible to such categories,⁵⁶ but this seems to be all by way of preamble; the decisive move comes with the assertion 'spiritual harmonies are of a vastly larger extent; i.e., the proportions are vastly oftener redoubled, and respect more beings, and require a vastly larger view to comprehend them, as some simple notes do more affect one who has not a comprehensive understanding of music.'⁵⁷

Why should beauty be defined by harmonious relations, in either the spiritual or the physical realm? The answer comes through a terse statement of a surprising move, a return to ontology: 'being, if we examine it narrowly, is nothing else but proportion.' The explanation of this is only slightly less gnomic: '[w]hen one being is inconsistent with another being, then being is contradicted. But contradiction to being is intolerable to perceiving being, and the consent to being most pleasing.'⁵⁸ There is a return to the centrality of perception here with a volitional element added to it; from this Edwards develops his basic statement of aesthetics: excellency is being's consent to being, and degrees of excellency are consent to wider and wider circles of being. True excellency – that is, true beauty, or true virtue – is being's consent to being-in-general, which is to say (as was made clear in the previous chapter⁵⁹) being's consent to God.

⁵³ Found in *YE6* pp.311-393.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.337.

⁵⁵ The settled nature of this position for Edwards is demonstrated by its centrality in *True Virtue* (see my analysis in the previous chapter, pp.64-66). The idea thus appears both in early metaphysical speculations and in one of the last works that Edwards wrote.

⁵⁶ *YE6* pp.332-336.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.336.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ See my comments on *True Virtue* on pp.64-66.

So it is that one alone cannot be excellent; one alone cannot be in relation, and so cannot consent to anything. Were God, even, to be a perfect monad, alone, it would be meaningless to speak of His beauty, excellency or moral perfection. Once again,⁶⁰ Edwards refuses to find the answer to God's need for relationship in creation; rather it is in being Father, Son and Holy Spirit that God is truly God: 'We have shewn that one alone cannot be excellent ... Therefore, if God is excellent, there must be plurality in God.'⁶¹ This is a very similar move to the one I indicated was open to him from his earlier writings: if, as Edwards has claimed, being is merely proportion, or relation, then love becomes an ontological category to set alongside knowledge. Edwards here reaches a genuinely relational ontology through introducing the volitional or affective aspect of reality alongside the cognitive aspect that he had been working with previously; *esse est percipi et amari* or *percipere et amare*; the knowledge and love of God are definitive of all created existence.

It is perhaps now appropriate to refer briefly to the most famous, or perhaps notorious, aspect of Edwards' doctrine of creation: the idea of 'continuous creation'. This is a fixed position, found in an early *Miscellanies* entry,⁶² and present still in *Original Sin*, finished the year before Edwards' death.⁶³ It should now be clear that this idea, and the accompanying one of an occasionalist account of causation,⁶⁴ are merely consequences of prior commitments to the positions outlined above. Existence is, for created realities, the condition of being present to the mind of God; without trying to divine Edwards' underlying conception of the nature of God's eternity, this position nevertheless surely demands that Edwards says what he does about continuous creation: for God to think of the beginning of a creature and to think of the continued

⁶⁰ See the previous chapter, pp.46-48.

⁶¹ *Miscellanies* 117; *YE13* p.284.

⁶² 'Tis certain with me that the world exists anew every moment, that the existence of things every moment ceases and is every moment renewed.' entry 125[a]; *YE13* p.288.

⁶³ 'God's upholding created substance, or causing its existence in each successive moment, is altogether equivalent to an *immediate production out of nothing*, at each moment, because its existence at this moment is not merely in part from God, but wholly from him, and not in any part, or degree, from its antecedent existence.' Italics original; *YE3* p.402.

⁶⁴ 'Indeed, in natural things means of effects in metaphysical strictness are not proper cause of the effects, but only occasions. God produces all effects.' *Miscellanies* 629 (as yet unpublished). The

existence of a creature are not radically different divine acts in the way that creating a material substance-world, and sustaining it, are. This is an interesting result, as the American Reformed tradition that looks back to Edwards has tended to assume that this doctrine of continuous creation is a minor aberration in the account which can be discarded at will.⁶⁵ Rather, as the discussion above should have demonstrated, it is an inescapable result of basic metaphysical commitments. If the universe is to give glory to God the way Edwards sees it doing, it must be possible to describe it as created 'anew each moment.'

Having said this, it is important to realise that Edwards' various comments on continuous creation, at least in works he prepared for publication, speak of providence as being 'equivalent to' continuous creation, rather than insisting on the actual truth of that theory.⁶⁶ Edwards' concern can perhaps be seen in the context of this chapter to be a polemical insistence on the radically dependent nature of creation, attacking the assumptions of matter that is itself *a se* or a 'world-machine' that, having been set going by God, does not need His upholding to continue. Perhaps Edwards goes too far in the other direction, but his concern to speak strongly against these prevalent positions is surely understandable.⁶⁷

Thus far in this chapter I have outlined Edwards' early metaphysical explorations. Although these apparently originated in reflection on Newton, I have indicated that a

previous sentence suggests that in saying 'God produces all effects', Edwards is thinking specifically of the Spirit of God.

⁶⁵ Gerstner, *Rational Biblical Theology* II.189-202, offers sufficient testimony for this point. Gerstner himself does attempt to link the idea of continuous creation with Edwards' metaphysics, but does not appear to have observed the closeness of connection for which I am arguing.

⁶⁶ The statement in *Original Sin*, cited in n.52 above, makes this point effectively, as does *Miscellanies* 1358 (in Townsend's collection, p.262): '[U]pholding the world in being, and creating of it, are not properly distinct works; for tis manifest, that ... creating of the world is but the beginning of upholding it, if I may so say; the beginning to give the world a supported and dependent existence: and preservation is only continuing to give it such a supported existence.' This interpretation is further supported by the various statements of the idea of continuous creation amongst the Reformed Orthodox; see Heppie, pp.251-263 & especially pp.257-258.

⁶⁷ In stressing the considered nature of the comments in works offered for publication, it is perhaps also possible to notice a shift through time. The most outspoken assertions of the literal truth of the idea of continuous creation are all early – *Miscellanies* 125 & 346, and *YE6* p.241. The more careful statements are later – *Miscellanies* 1039 & 1358, and *Original Sin* (cfr. *supra*). Theologically, it is tempting to link this shift to Edwards' awakening interest in the Trinitarian mediation of creation

commitment to the teleological positions that I outlined in the previous chapter is basic to their developed and lasting forms, notably idealism and the idea of a 'continuous creation'. Thus Edwards' account of the being of creation depended upon his understanding of its purpose - on, that is, God's self-glorification. Further, his attempts to find a different basis for Newtonian physics allowed him, to the extent that they are successful, to continue to hold a teleological view of creation in an Enlightened and modern intellectual context. Thus the possibility of creation reflecting its purpose, of every creature, however 'small and abject', representing the goodness of God, is established. I will go on to explore how creation reflects its purpose, according to Edwards, in considering his creative re-applications of the idea of typology, but before that a brief excursus comparing the idealistic metaphysics thus far uncovered with those of Berkeley will prove instructive.

Edwards' similarity with Berkeley has often been noticed and commented upon, but attempts to prove dependence are generally considered to have failed, thus far.⁶⁸ Rather, a common theistic re-appropriation of Locke, Malebranche and Bayle is assumed.⁶⁹ Berkeley's idealism⁷⁰ begins in a response to Locke on the question of 'material substance'. Locke had asserted that the knowledge of the external world comes to us only by sensations; the causes of these sensations are the 'powers' that objects possess to cause them, which he called 'qualities'.⁷¹ He then proceeded to divide these into secondary qualities, which cause a sensation in the mind of the beholder but bear no relation to the nature of the object itself, and primary qualities which are attached to the substance of the object.⁷² Berkeley objects that this distinction, although it has a long history in philosophy prior to Locke, is confused

(discussed in the previous chapter), but the textual evidence is too scarce to make this anything more than a speculation.

⁶⁸ See YE6 p.76 n.3 for a useful bibliography of the debate.

⁶⁹ On this see Morris, William S. *The Young Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstruction* Carlson, Brooklyn, 1991, pp.137-139; 257.

⁷⁰ Berkeley's *Works* have been edited in nine volumes by A.A. Luce and T.E. Jessop (pub. Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, 1948-1957). Following the opinion of most commentators, I will take the *Principles of Human Knowledge* (*Works* II pp. 19-113) as the basic expression of Berkeley's philosophy, making reference to other works only when they offer clearer statements of a particular position. Basic secondary works include Warnock, G.J. *Berkeley* Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1953 and Berman, David *George Berkeley: Idealism and the Man* Clarendon, Oxford, 1994.

⁷¹ *Essay* II.i-viii.

⁷² *Essay* II.viii.9-10.

and meaningless: either all qualities are present only in the mind or all are possessed by the 'substance' of the object.⁷³ Berkeley proceeds to demolish the concept of 'substance', asking simply how we can know of its existence: Locke had admitted that it cannot be observed, as only the sensations caused by qualities can be observed.⁷⁴ Neither can it be argued for on the basis of the existence of sensations, since it is clear that (through memory or imagination) we can generate sensations in our minds of things that are not there.⁷⁵ So, it is simply a supposition; albeit a necessary one, according to Locke, to account for the order and regularity of the world: a certain appearance, smell, taste, and feel coincide in my experience at regular intervals, and I call the combination an orange; does this not imply that there is some thing that causes this particular collection of sensations? No, says Berkeley, this may be accounted for entirely by the goodness of God.⁷⁶ All admit God to be the Creator of the world, why suppose that He has created numberless beings without any purpose to their existence?⁷⁷ His clinching argument relies on a presupposition: assuming, as Berkeley does, that only volitional beings (*i.e.* spirits) can properly be said to 'cause' anything, to speak of substance causing sensations is meaningless.⁷⁸

So, no material substance exists. What does exist is a world of spirits causing sensations in themselves and each other. The orderliness and regularity of our experience of the world as other than us (in comparison to, say, a dream) is a gift of the good God; the laws of nature, for example, are not descriptions of physical cause and effect – a meaningless term – but evidences of the faithfulness and constancy of God.⁷⁹

With this, admittedly brief, overview of Berkeley's philosophy in place, a comparison with Edwards may be made. The similarities are obvious and striking, but certainly the suggestion that most can be accounted for by a common response to Locke seems

⁷³ *Principles* 9-15 (*Works* II pp.44-47); the arguments are more forcefully stated in the first of the *Three Dialogues* (*Works* II pp.187-194).

⁷⁴ *Principles* 4-6 (*Works* II pp.42-43).

⁷⁵ *Principles* 18 (*Works* II p.48).

⁷⁶ *Principles* 30-33 (*Works* II pp.53-54).

⁷⁷ *Principles* 19 (*Works* II p.49).

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

plausible: Locke's conception of primary and secondary qualities is without doubt confused, and once this is criticised his discussion of substance is clearly vulnerable. What is more interesting is the difference between Edwards and Berkeley; the obvious initial point concerns the relational and aesthetic note that Edwards introduces to his account with the *Notes on the Mind*, which is wholly lacking in Berkeley. This points to an underlying difference that is of the greatest moment: the thoroughly Trinitarian nature of Edwards' account. Not that Berkeley disbelieved in the Trinity – he was an Anglican bishop, after all – but, in his philosophical writings, he speaks of God without thinking of God as Trinity, and so the doctrine has no significance in his account of the matters I am discussing.

This difference serves to rescue Edwards in some measure from a criticism that has been made recently of both these thinkers, that they insist on the immediacy of God's dealings with creation.⁸⁰ The relationality of Edwards' account provides an illustration of the first point of response to this criticism: with Berkeley, one can get the sense that God preserves each creature individually in His thoughts; Edwards' stress on relationship means that God is seen as preserving the creation as a whole, and each creature in its place within the whole. Already the immediacy, although still present, is of a different, and perhaps less vicious, form to that found in Berkeley;⁸¹ there is some attempt to rescue the internal coherence of the creation that the old scholastic idea of second causes had preserved. But this argument can be taken further: for both Edwards and Berkeley, existence is finally in being known by God, but for Edwards this is, as I have argued, a category of Christological participation.⁸²

⁷⁹ *Principles* 65-66 (*Works* II pp.69-70).

⁸⁰ This criticism has particularly been made by Colin Gunton in a number of places – see, for example, 'The End of Causality' in Gunton (ed.) *The Doctrine of Creation (cit.)* pp.78-79; Prof. Gunton's point, that a doctrine of creation must speak of mediation, but mediation through Son and Spirit, rather than any created (or eternal) forms, archetypes or substances, is well made; my concern here is to suggest that Edwards has more of such a doctrine than Gunton gives him credit for.

⁸¹ An illustration will perhaps help: There is a sense in the creation account in Gen.1:1-2:3 that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – not only is each part of creation pronounced 'good' in its own particularity, but the whole brought together is declared to be 'very good'. My suggestion is that Edwards' account of creation, with its awareness of relationality, is equipped to account for this text, whereas Berkeley's is not so equipped. In discussing soteriological questions, however, Edwards does see God as immediately present to a given individual. I will discuss this in the following two chapters.

⁸² As will become clear in my discussion of *History of the Work of Redemption* (pp.105-112 below), this Christological participation is firmly rooted in the gospel narrative. The same could not be said of Edwards' account of the role of the Spirit, which remains slightly idealistic, and to this extent Gunton's criticism retains force.

Again, as Edwards develops his ontology in the *Notes on the Mind*, 'consent' or love becomes an important category: if to be is to be known and loved by God, then in Edwards' terms, created ontology is the gift of the Father through His Son and His Spirit.⁸³

Unfortunately, interest in Edwards' idealism has been largely limited to the philosophical community, and so the implicit Trinitarianism of the account has seemingly been overlooked. It perhaps becomes more obvious when placed alongside Edwards' more direct statements about the work of creation. John H. Gerstner has provided abundant textual evidence spanning Edwards' adult life to show that he regularly spoke of God creating the world through His Son and His Spirit.⁸⁴ My argument is simply that these passages ought to be allowed to interpret his idealism; there are, as I have indicated, several suggestions that the idealist language of knowledge and love is implicitly Trinitarian, and occasional passages where it is explicitly so. I have argued in the last chapter that he regularly uses the language of God's knowledge and God's love to speak of the Son and the Spirit, and that such language was natural within the tradition. There seems little doubt, then, that Edwards' is saying the same thing in his more philosophical statements of idealism as he is in his explicit references to Trinitarian agency in creation and providence.

That Edwards never drew these threads together in the way that I have suggested is natural is only to say that he never embarked on his projected *Summa*, an observation

⁸³ This latter move is explicit in the *Notes on the Mind* 45, where Edwards first argues that 'the personal Holy Spirit' is God's 'infinite beauty, and this is God's infinite consent to being in general', and then goes on to insist that 'his love to the creature is ... the communication of himself ... his Holy Spirit.' YE6 p.364.

⁸⁴ *Rational Biblical Theology* II.189-202, and especially pp.189-190 & 198-199. A few of Gerstner's citations will give the flavour: '[H]ere is a consultation of the Persons of the Trinity about the Creation of man for every Person had his particular and distinct concern in it as well as in the Redemption of men. The Father employed the Son and the Holy Ghost on this work.' (*Blank Bible* on Gen.1:26); 'Therefore both the beginning of the world and the end of the world are by Christ for both are subject to the great purposes of the work redemption. He is therefore both the Creator and the Judge of the world ... the alpha and the omega.' (*ibid.* on Eph.3:9); 'It was made especially the Holy Spirit's work to bring the world to its beauty and perfection out of the chaos; for the beauty of the world is a communication of God's beauty.' (*Miscellanies* 293). This last quotation also demonstrates my point that Edwards did not separate idealist language and Biblical language when speaking of creation. Gerstner does not mention *Miscellanies* 1349, although it makes the point as clearly as any text: 'tis manifest by the Scripture, that the world was made by the Holy Ghost or Spirit of God, as well as by the Son of God...'

that is hardly novel! Nevertheless, Edwards has two regular ways of describing God's relationship with His creation, in terms of his idealism, and as explicit Trinitarian agency. In a writer like Edwards, who seamlessly combined philosophy and theology and would certainly not admit a gap, it is natural to assume not only that these two can be reconciled, but that in his own mind they were. This given, and with the evidence I have offered for reading the idealist language in Trinitarian terms, the combination I have suggested seems the obvious one. In his later works, at least, Edwards appears to be working with a concept of Trinitarian mediation, couched in Augustinian language.

This section has been something of an extended excursus; I began the chapter by indicating that Edwards' context demanded that he find an intellectually satisfying 'theistic Newtonianism' before he could begin to assert any teleological content to the being of creation. That his idealism (so-called) is appropriately Newtonian was established by the earlier parts of the section; that it is appropriately theistic, in the fullest Christian sense, has been the burden of the latter discussions. The result is the claim that Edwards offers an account of creation that could, in principle, allow him to assert the presence of moral meaning – teleology – in a way that could provide a basis for natural science, and so was appropriate to the early modernity that formed his intellectual context. The remaining question is whether, and how, Edwards actually sees God as glorifying Himself through the created order. Hobbes had insisted that all true knowledge of creation was either natural history or political history;⁸⁵ the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to exploring the tool Edwards uses to uncover God's self-revelation in both these spheres – the exegetical method of typology.

3.2 Typology and the Meaning of Creation

Typological exegesis has its roots in the earliest days of the Church, where it was eagerly adopted and honed as a Christological hermeneutic with which to appropriate the Old Testament as Christian scripture.⁸⁶ Although varieties of typological and

⁸⁵ *Leviathan* I.9.

⁸⁶ For the early history of typology, see: Goppelt, Leonhard *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (E.T. Donald H. Madvig) Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1982 (for Biblical

spiritualizing exegesis can be found throughout the history of the Church,⁸⁷ The immediate background to Edwards' use of this method was the Reformed re-appropriation of typology which occurred in the wake of the attempted rejection of all forms of allegorizing by the first Reformers.⁸⁸ Lowance⁸⁹ traces Edwards' Puritan inheritance in a helpful way, but there was also an inheritance from the continental Reformed Orthodox, and he could have found typology used freely in standard theology texts, Wollebius⁹⁰ and Turretin⁹¹ for instance. It is no surprise, then, that Edwards adopted a typological method of exegesis; nor is it particularly relevant to my concerns in this chapter. What is both surprising and interesting, however, is Edwards' appropriation of typology as a method of finding meaning and coherence in the created order and the course of human history. These moves will be the burden of this section.

The centrality of typology to Edwards' interpretations of Scripture has often been noted,⁹² as has his extension of typology to the natural and historical realms.⁹³ What

background); Daniélou, Jean *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (E.T. Wulstan Hibberd) Burns & Oates, London, 1960 (the classic text on Patristic usage); Woolcombe, K.J. 'The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology' in Lampe, G.W.H. & Woolcombe, K.J. (eds.) *Essays on Typology* SCM Press, London, 1957 pp.39-75 (for a briefer overview of both aspects).

⁸⁷ For a useful overview see Frochlich, Karlfield ' "Always to Keep to the Literal Sense in Holy Scripture Means to Kill One's Soul": The State of Biblical Hermeneutics at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century' in Miner, Earl (ed.) *Literary Uses of Typology: From the Late Middle Ages to the Present* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977 pp.20-48; a more complete study can be found in Preus, James S. *From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1969.

⁸⁸ For this history see Lowance, Mason I. *The Language of Canaan: Metaphor and Symbol in New England from the Puritans to the Transcendentalists* Harvard University Press, London, 1980 pp.13-27.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ See Beardslee, *Reformed Dogmatics* pp.80-82.

⁹¹ *Institutes* 12:7.

⁹² In discussing Edwards' *Notes on Scripture*, its modern editor Stephen J. Stein asserts that it 'documents the consuming interest in typology' (YE15 p.3). He goes on to say that 'The collective result of his exegesis is a scriptural organon with the typological principle at its foundation, a system composed of biblical themes that Edwards regarded as central to Christianity...' (YE15 p.4). Wilson H. Kimnach, who is editing Edwards' sermons, calls him an 'ardent practitioner' of typology (YE10 p.228) and an 'avid typologist' (YE10 p.229).

⁹³ On this see: YE10 pp.230-236; YE11 *passim*. (this volume contains Edwards' texts on typology; close attention to both the texts and the excellent introductory material by Wallace E. Anderson and Mason I. Lowance is invaluable in discussion of this subject); *Miscellanies* 119 (YE13 p.285) and 362 (YE13 pp.434-435); Perry Miller's edition of, and introduction to, *Images and Shadows of Divine Things*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1948.

is perhaps less often seen, but crucial to my purposes in this thesis, is the motivation behind this extension of typology.⁹⁴ Edwards argues thus:

...the whole outward creation, which is but the shadows of beings, is so made as to represent spiritual things ... it's agreeable to God's wisdom that it should be so, that the inferior and shadowy parts of his works should be made to represent those things that are more real and excellent ... the highest parts of his work ... Thus God glorifies himself and instructs the minds he has made.⁹⁵ The physical world is created and ordered to reflect and to show forth the spiritual world – God, and His relationships with His creatures – so that, through knowing God, we will glorify Him. Thus, typology, too, is made to serve the overarching teleological concern that I am highlighting.

In order to explore this extension of typology to other areas it is, unsurprisingly, necessary to be aware of the key features of typology in its original, exegetical, form. As already noted, this stretches right back to the Scriptural writers themselves – indeed, some writers see typology used even within the Old Testament, as the prophets employ stories from the Torah in original ways to speak of what will happen to Israel.⁹⁶ This prophetic typology is perhaps best illustrated by an example, which I will borrow from Daniélou.⁹⁷ The return of the exiles that is prophesied in Isaiah 40-55 is spoken of repeatedly as a typological fulfillment of the Exodus story. God's people have completed their 'hard service' (40:2); and He will once again lead His people out (40:11). The comparison is at times explicit: the God who 'made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters' is now 'making a way in the desert, and streams in the wasteland' (43:16,19). Again, memories of the first Exodus are invoked with the command to come out in 48:20-21. But typology is more than simple repetition; God is doing greater things, repeating with elaborations what He has done in the past: 'This is what the LORD says – he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together ... "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! ... I am making a way in the desert..."'. Whereas the

⁹⁴ The attention that has been given to this subject has usually, thus far, come from students of American literature, and so Edwards' purpose has been given less attention than the path he paved for Emerson, *et al.* See, for example, Lowance *The Language of Canaan (cit.)*.

⁹⁵ *Miscellanies* 362 (YE13 p.434).

⁹⁶ For instance, see Daniélou, *op.cit.* pp.12-13 for typologies of paradise in Hosea, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah and Isaiah; pp.70-73 for flood typologies in Isaiah and the Psalms; and particularly pp.153-157 for typologies of the Exodus throughout the later Old Testament writings, but preeminently in Is.40-55.

first Exodus was remembered by the unleavened bread, because the people fled without time to bake properly (Ex.12:39), now God says ‘Depart, depart from there ... but you will not leave in haste or flight ...’ (Is.52:11-12). Jeremiah completes the picture: this new salvation will replace the Exodus in the minds of all people: ‘the days are coming ... when people will no longer say, “As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the people up out of Egypt,” but they will say “As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of Israel out of the land of the north ...”.’ (Jer.23:7-8); and there will be a new covenant attached to the new Exodus, written not on tablets of stone but on human hearts (31:31-33).

Old Testament prophetic typology, then, looked forward to mighty acts of God that repeated what had gone before in a more significant and more ‘spiritual’ way.⁹⁸ It is this background that is taken and developed by the New Testament writers to provide the texts which are the foundation of Christian typological exegesis.⁹⁹ The key difference is that, whereas Old Testament typology looked forward, seeking to discern the contours of a coming act of God through a retelling of what had gone before, New Testament typology looks backward, showing how every act of God in the past found its true meaning and true fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Whether it is the Matthean tradition of seeking correspondences to events in the life of Christ,¹⁰⁰ or Johannine sacramental typology,¹⁰¹ the New Testament exegesis of the Old often depends on a new, but still typological, hermeneutic.¹⁰²

Most of the writers referred to are very concerned to distinguish typology from allegory.¹⁰³ At times this distinction can feel like little more than ‘types are interpretations I accept, allegories are those I do not,’ but there is a legitimate basis to it. When the (unquestionably allegorical) Old Testament interpretation of Philo is

⁹⁷ *op.cit.* pp.155-156.

⁹⁸ More spiritual in that (for example) the new covenant was to be written in hearts, not on stones.

⁹⁹ Typological exegesis was, of course, practiced and developed in the intertestamental period, and in Judaism of the New Testament period (Philo is particularly relevant here), but such developments are not important for my current purposes. See Goppelt, *op.cit.* pp.23-58 for some details.

¹⁰⁰ e.g. Mt.2:15-18; 3:14-16; 12:17-21; 27:9-10.

¹⁰¹ See Daniélou, *op.cit.* pp.160-161.

¹⁰² Old Testament stories as types of the spiritual life of the Christian also feature (just) in the New Testament – II Pet.2 provides one example. This form of typology becomes very significant in the Fathers, of course.

¹⁰³ For example: Daniélou, pp.202-226; Woolcombe, pp.40-41; Goppelt, pp.48-53.

compared to the New Testament and the early Fathers (particularly Irenaeus), a difference in approach is clear: Philo moves 'upwards', from a historical to a 'spiritual' sense; Irenaeus moves forwards, from a historical prefiguration to its historical fulfillment – and, crucially, finds every fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁴ Two characteristics thus distinguish the legitimate (because Biblical) typological method from the illegitimate allegorical one: historicity – or perhaps better, eschatological nature – and Christocentricity.¹⁰⁵

Passing over 1500 years of history in a somewhat cavalier way, we can see that the typology that Jonathan Edwards inherited only just managed to keep hold of these distinctives. Samuel Mather's standard manual, *Figures or Types of the Old Testament*, certainly insisted on them in its definition,¹⁰⁶ but respected works could break either rule (although seemingly not both). So, central to the self-understanding of the New England Puritans was the typological assertion that they were the New Israel, and so the attempt to apply the Old Testament typologically not to 'hold forth something of Christ', but to find prophecies of their own lives.¹⁰⁷ Equally, Puritanism on both sides of the Atlantic found images of Christ's redemption in the ordinary things of life, not just the history of redemption recorded in Scripture.¹⁰⁸ There are even instances of both rules being ignored, of a thoroughgoing natural theology that sought to read God's will for the people directly from the events of nature.¹⁰⁹ The scene was set, then, for Edwards to re-forge typology in ways that would serve his own theological purposes.

¹⁰⁴ On Philo see Daniélou pp.202-216; on Irenaeus *ibid.* pp.30-47.

¹⁰⁵ This statement is an oversimplification, although adequate for my purposes. For more complicated assessments, see Daniélou, pp.287-288 and Woolcombe, p.75.

¹⁰⁶ 'A Type is some outward or sensible thing ordained of God under the Old Testament, to represent and hold forth something of Christ in the New.' Quoted in *YELL* p.27; see also Lowance, *The Language of Canaan (cit.)* pp.74-88.

¹⁰⁷ A number of illustrations of this, together with an analysis of its changing expression through time, may be found in Lowance, *ibid.* pp.57-61. For examples of Edwards doing something very like this, see *Miscellanies* 691 (on the Sabbath) and 694 (on baptism) (both as yet unpublished), where Edwards argues theological points by using a typological hermeneutic to interpret the Old Testament.

¹⁰⁸ The classic example, and a work Edwards used and respected, is John Flavel's *Husbandry Spiritualized*. See *YELL* p.23; Lowance, *op.cit.* pp.69-72.

¹⁰⁹ Lowance pp.63-67.

On the basis of the theology of creation I have described earlier in this chapter, Edwards was in a position to construct a doctrine of general revelation. If creation is not self-sufficient, but instead upheld and preserved by the knowledge and love of God, by Son and Spirit, then it is natural to assume that the world is morally and theologically meaningful, that with the right hermeneutic God's revelation may be found in creation as well as in the pages of Scripture. Puritan developments in typology offered the necessary hermeneutic, which Edwards eagerly adopted. The various notebooks published under the title *Typological Writings* in the Yale Edition¹¹⁰ demonstrate his abiding interest in this area, but traces can be found throughout the corpus¹¹¹ – 'natural typology' was a fixed and important part of Edwards' worldview.

Edwards' essays in this form of typology could be seen as just another pre-Enlightenment attempt to discover some form of general revelation. This doctrine has not had the best reputation amongst theologians in recent decades, with a resounding *Nein!* still echoing whenever it is mentioned.¹¹² In Edwards' own inheritance, the particular theory he advances would hardly have been mainstream, a fact he recognises when he candidly admits that 'I expect by very ridicule and contempt to be called a man of a very fruitful brain and copious fancy, but they are welcome to it. I am not ashamed to own that I believe the whole universe, heaven and earth, air and seas, and the divine constitution and history of the holy Scriptures, be full of the images of divine things...'.¹¹³ However, this would be a too-facile dismissal of Edwards' position, albeit one he invited; here, as elsewhere, his theories are integrated into his theological and philosophical commitments, and coherent with the overall system he presents.

¹¹⁰ YE11.

¹¹¹ See YE10 pp.227-236 for a discussion of Edwards' use of typology in his preaching; the various entries headed 'Types' in the *Miscellanies*; or YE8 pp.25-26 for the centrality of typology in Edwards' ethical theories.

¹¹² Although Edwards' caveats would presumably gain approval from Barth: 'The whole of Christian divinity depends upon divine revelation. For tho there are many truths concerning God and our duty to him, that are evident by the light of nature; yet not one truth is taught by the light of nature in that manner in which it is necessary for us to know it. For the knowledge of no truth in divinity is of any significance to us, any otherwise than it some way or other belongs to the gospel scheme, or has relation to Christ the Mediatour.' *Miscellanies* 837.

¹¹³ YE11 p.152.

The key assertion, on which all Edwards' efforts in natural typology are based, is that the natural, physical world has been deliberately created in order to represent in its various parts spiritual realities. It is not just that gravitational attraction as the basis of the (Newtonian) universe is a good illustration of the role of love in the spiritual world; rather God ordered the universe in that way in order to image forth love.¹¹⁴ Again, the gradual progress of Spring as the sun approaches is 'a remarkable type' of the coming gradual approach of the kingdom of God, and Edwards spells out the various resemblances, which he clearly believed were arranged by God to be read off in this way, in some detail. This theory is at its clearest in *Miscellanies* 362, which Edwards indicated would serve as a heading for his 'Types' notebook:¹¹⁵

For indeed the whole outward creation, which is but the shadows of beings, is so made as to represent spiritual things. It might be demonstrated by the wonderful agreement in thousands of things, much of the same kind as is between the types of the Old Testament and their antitypes, and by spiritual things being so often and continually compared with them in the Word of God. And it's agreeable to God's wisdom that it should be so, that the inferior and shadowy parts of his works should be made to represent those things that are more real and excellent, spiritual and divine, to represent the things that immediately concern himself and the highest parts of his work. Spiritual things are the crown and glory, the head and soul, the very end and alpha and omega of all other works: what therefore can be more agreeable to wisdom, than that they should be so made as to shadow them forth?¹¹⁶

This paragraph is preceded by one showing the sun to be a type of the Trinity, and followed by a discussion of Biblical types, and a brief reference to an Augustinian image of the Trinity in the human mind. I have quoted at such length because several parts of this crucial definition are relevant to my argument. Firstly, it is clear how much the typological system depends on the metaphysics I have discussed in the earlier part of this chapter – not just the idealism, but also the relational nature of the world, are concepts that underlie Edwards' adoption of this interpretative method.¹¹⁷ Secondly, this for the first time in this chapter introduces the teleological note that is central to my thesis: 'spiritual things,' things that 'immediately concern [God]

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* p.81.

¹¹⁵ According to Anderson a reference to this entry was added next to the title – see *YE11* p.7.

¹¹⁶ *YE13* pp.434-435.

¹¹⁷ Anderson comments on this relationship in his Introduction to the 'Images' manuscript: *YE11* pp.13-20.

himself', are the purpose, goal or 'end' of the material creation.¹¹⁸ Later in the entry Edwards will say 'thus God glorifies himself and instructs the minds he has made.' Edwards is able to adopt typology because it is consonant with his prior commitments concerning the doctrine of creation, and he chooses to adopt it because it furthers his fundamental teleological vision.¹¹⁹

The content that Edwards finds in his types is also significant: the tradition had seen all the types of the Old Testament as finding their antitype in Christ, but Edwards' natural types extend further.¹²⁰ Probably the best way to describe the complicated evidence is to say that Edwards saw creation as imaging redemption. The antitypes, although clustered around Christ and His work, also include such things as the sanctification of the saints, the temptation and destruction of the reprobate, and the wiles of the devils. All these, however, may be included under the general heading of the work of redemption, broadly considered. That this is an unsurprising result should be clear from a restatement: Edwards' great theme is the self-glorification, by means of self-communication, of God as the final end of all His actions; this self-glorification occurs especially in the eternal joy – or death – of His intelligent (*i.e.* spiritual, in Edwards' terms) creatures; the physical creation serves this self-glorification. Therefore, the created order exists for God to make known His will concerning salvation and perdition; this it does by being a mass of typological relationships with the 'higher' spiritual reality.

One final point is relevant here: physical type and spiritual antitype are connected by a relationship expressly thought of by God – that is to say, the connection is

¹¹⁸ Again, Anderson notes this emphasis: *YEI*/pp.9-10.

¹¹⁹ In addition, Edwards believes that this method of approaching nature is sanctioned by Biblical use, and he lists a number of examples – for instance, marriage as a type of Christ's love for the Church. 'Images' 5,9,12,56 (pp.52,53,54,67). His typological hermeneutic, by which he sought to identify true types (ordered by God) from mere fanciful resemblances, was dependent on the assumption that he could 'learn the language of types' from these Scriptural examples. See 'Types' notebook, *YEI*/p.152, where Edwards uses the image of a 'language of types' himself; also 'Images' 156 (*YEI*/p.106) where Edwards suggests that Scripture both tells us plainly what are the mysteries that are typified in the natural world, and teaches us to think typologically by the many examples it gives us.

¹²⁰ Although the 'Types of the Messiah' notebook demonstrates that Edwards was committed to traditional Christological typology of the Old Testament. *YEI*/pp.187-324.

metaphysical; types are really related to their antitypes.¹²¹ Reading a system like Edwards' it would be easy to assume that he is in some sense downplaying the importance of creation, but he is not. Creation is genuinely – metaphysically; objectively, in Jenson's phrase – bound up with God's final purpose. Jenson again: 'Reality is a community of minds; and it is an actual community, that is, one engaged in communication ... The world of bodies is the *between* of their communication, the perspectival field in which persons can come together while each remaining an *other* from all the others...' ¹²² Edwards' typological account of creation emphasises an aspect that is only implicit in the quotation: the world of bodies is also part of what enables God to fulfil His highest purpose of communicating with His creatures.¹²³

There remains a weakness in the account as I have described it thus far, however: communication is a dynamic category, not a static one, as was clear in my discussion of God's self-communication in the previous chapter. In this context, that is to say that creation must be dynamic, not static, and that Edwards' system could not work without a theology of history.

Hans Frei,¹²⁴ in discussing how changing views of the Bible led to the failure of traditional typology, links this with changing views of history. Frei offers three elements that serve to define 'precritical realistic reading' of Scripture – which all, significantly, relate to the nature of history.¹²⁵ Firstly, all history-like narrative in Scripture was unreflectively assumed to describe true historical occurrences accurately. Secondly, typological exegesis was used to read a single narrative out of the Bible – a historical metanarrative. Thirdly, this metanarrative was assumed to embrace the whole world, and so readers were called to fit their own lives, and the lives they experienced in their own periods in history, into the story. The empiricism of Locke and Newton, and with them the Enlightenment, clearly offered a powerful challenge to each of these points: historical science, treating all texts as equal, and

¹²¹ Jenson makes the point well: 'Edwards' typologizing ... is not an arbitrary game or mere hangover from older exegetical method; since all things are thoughts in God's mind, their imaging references are precisely their objective connections.' *America's Theologian* pp.48-49.

¹²² *ibid.* p.32.

¹²³ And as such is good, as I have already indicated Edwards insisted (pp.86-87 above).

¹²⁴ See Frei, Hans W. *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* Yale University Press, London, 1974 pp.6-8.

trusting the mute testimony of artefacts more than that of any text, would determine what was historical and what was not; the literary structure of the Scriptural texts would be determined by critical analysis, not by *a priori* theological commitments; and if a metanarrative was to be permitted, it would be the 'scientifically validated' one of the Enlighteners, not something found in ancient texts. Frei speaks of an increasing distance between the narrative as read and reality as it was understood, and a reversal in the direction of interpretation: no longer was the question how well my experience of the world fitted the Biblical narrative; rather, the Biblical narrative was judged on its relation to my experience.¹²⁶

Described like this, there is much in Edwards that sounds precritical. This is perhaps unsurprising – he lived, after all, at the very start of this movement, when an unreflective preacher might have been able to continue in the old ways with some success, serenely unaware of the winds of change. But Edwards was not unreflective; Stephen J. Stein, in his introduction to the *Notes on Scripture*, demonstrates that Edwards was very aware of the modern critical challenges in his exegesis, and often seeking to combat one or another of them.¹²⁷ In part, the conflict was between two radically divergent ways of viewing the world – both Enlightened, in the sense of taking Newton and Locke seriously, but using the conclusions of Newton and Locke very differently. It is important to recognise this because a discussion of the points Frei makes from the perspective of Edwards will at times depend on a flat denial, but this is not an unreflective denial seeking to hold to the 'medieval' certainties, but a denial based on a different way of being Enlightened and modern. An example would be Frei's third point, concerning metanarrative: with Edwards' account of creation, as described in the earlier part of this chapter, a Christological metanarrative can be simply insisted on as not just consonant with, but actually demanded by, an adequate description of the being of the world.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ *ibid.* pp.2-3.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* pp.5-6.

¹²⁷ *YE15* pp.12-21. See also *Miscellanies* 851, 1172 and 1293, which each show Edwards reflecting carefully on his hermeneutic.

¹²⁸ This is not to criticise Frei's penetrating analysis, of course, merely to point out that Edwards had resources to combat the general trends Frei identifies.

This given, Edwards could continue to seek this metanarrative in Scripture, and so to read the Bible as an overarching story into which the events of life are to be fitted, as Frei describes. That is to say, Edwards could continue, on the basis of his doctrine of creation, to offer a theology of history. His practice in this direction can be seen in a number of works, the *Notes on Scripture*,¹²⁹ or the various works contained in the *Apocalyptic Writings*,¹³⁰ but it shows up most clearly in the *History of the Work of Redemption*.¹³¹ This work, consisting of a series of thirty sermons on the text Isaiah 51:8, describes the progress of God's redemption as Edwards reads it in Scripture from 'the fall of man to the end of the world'¹³² and constitutes an overarching and breathtakingly ambitious theology of history.

Before analysing this work, it would be as well to gather some indications of Edwards' viewpoint from other texts. Perhaps the clearest proof that he had a theology of history is his conviction, already mentioned in the previous chapter, that history continues beyond the end of the world, into the lives of the saints in heaven: 'If the happiness of the creature be considered as it will be, in the whole of the creature's eternal duration, with all the infinity of its progress and infinite increase of nearness and union...'.¹³³ Progress and increase continue in perfection;¹³⁴ there is nothing static about the joys of heaven, any more than there is about God's gift of Himself through the created order of the earth.¹³⁵

Miscellanies 547¹³⁶ discusses the theology of history in relation to the teleological theme that I am pursuing. The 'goal of providence' will not be reached until the end of the world, insists Edwards, but all created providence is a necessary part of that goal. Each snapshot state of the world in history must be of relevance, or 'providence would never have ordered them. The world would never have been in such a state.' The first corollary of this offers a position that emphasises my theme in this thesis:

¹²⁹ YE15.

¹³⁰ YE5, particularly the *Notes on the Apocalypse*.

¹³¹ YE9.

¹³² The Doctrine of the whole discourse; see YE9 p.116.

¹³³ From the *Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*; YE8 pp.533-534.

¹³⁴ For Edwards, unlike so much Platonist-influenced theology, temporality is not a defect in the creature.

¹³⁵ Paul Ramsey, the editor of YE8, has collected the various references Edwards makes to heaven as a progressive state in his Appendix III: YE8 pp.706-738.

this, argues Edwards, proves the survival of created intelligences, as these intermediate states of the world exist only in the memory of such intelligences. This may seem slightly out of step with the metaphysics that I have described this chapter, as an assertion that history has genuine reality because it is eternally perceived and enjoyed by God could be made,¹³⁷ but Edwards' point is that what God does is done so that His glory may be known and loved, and so there must be creatures remember history and so to see God's glory therein displayed.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the point stands: history has its own ontology, and if Edwards will use the word 'shadow', it is not the insubstantial illusion of Plato's cave. The world remains beautiful, but it is the sequential beauty of a piece of music (to borrow an image from Jenson¹³⁹) rather than the static beauty of the 'still life'. The community of minds meeting harmoniously in dependent material reality is subject to change and movement – movement forward, to all eternity.

Here, once again, Edwards' rigorous Calvinism is of benefit.¹⁴⁰ If it is assumed that the fall was a mistake, never part of the plan, then the same is likely to be said of history. The turning of ages will become, as it did for Origen,¹⁴¹ an unfortunate necessity to get back to the place where it all started. For Edwards, God's first and best thought was of change – the crucifixion of Christ being 'as it were the cause of all the decrees, the greatest of all decreed events, and that on which all other decreed events depend as their main foundation.'¹⁴² The end of history is not its beginning; indeed, history has no 'end', in the sense of a static, immutable 'Omega point'.

¹³⁶ Townsend pp.135-136.

¹³⁷ Again, it is easier to hold this from Edwards' position than from Berkeley's, as the successive states of history could be described in terms of differing relationships between created objects. Relationships, it will be remembered, are integral to Edwards' system, but not to that of Berkeley, as indeed Edwards states in this *Miscellanies* entry: '... the various successive states of the world do in conjunction or as connected in a scheme together attain God's great design.'

¹³⁸ '[T]here is nothing remains than can be supposed to be the thing reached or brought forth as the great thing aimed at in all that God had for so many ages been doing ... God ... has gained no knowledge ... by all that has happened. There remains no declarative glory of God nor any benefit to any other being.'

¹³⁹ *op.cit.* p.35.

¹⁴⁰ Jenson makes the point, although his illustration is perhaps unfortunate: 'The division runs between those for whom Christ's atoning work is contingent to the sheer fact of sin, and those for whom the fact of sin is contingent to God's intent to redeem. Some cannot and some can join the ... carol that rejoices in Adam's sin, since otherwise "our Lady" would not have been "heaven's queen".'
(*op.cit.* p.45) With all due deference to Professor Jenson's knowledge of the subject, I for one would be surprised to find Edwards willing to refer to the Blessed Virgin as 'heaven's queen'!

¹⁴¹ *De Principiis* 1.6.2.

Rather, 'the end of history' still features temporal change, with the saints moving into closer and closer union with God for all eternity. History, very simply, is the necessary condition for the event of the overflow of God's glory, and as such can never come to an end. Given this, it is natural that Edwards should conceive of precisely the *history* of the work of redemption as a fitting subject for a major discourse - and a fitting title for his projected *Summa*.¹⁴³

A problem raises its head, of course: a theology of history may very well speak of the necessity of Old Testament history for the Incarnation – indeed, may even claim that such *Heilsgeschte* is presupposed by the fact of personal conversion.¹⁴⁴ But what of the rise of Islam, the Reformation, or the European colonisation of the Americas? How are we to theologise concerning these? Three approaches seem possible: one may, with Augustine,¹⁴⁵ proffer general theories concerning the nature of human history and speculate as to how recent events might relate to such; one may, with the Puritan radicals and fifth monarchists of the English Civil War seek prophecies in Scripture that speak about the current day; or, most ambitiously, one could seek a hermeneutic with which to interpret history itself. Perhaps the feature that marks Edwards most clearly as an Enlightenment thinker is his confidence, not just in the rationality of the world, but in his ability to uncover that rationality; it is no surprise, then, to find Edwards adopting all three of these methods.

I have already discussed the theology of history that will underline the first. *Miscellanies* entry 547 can be seen in this light: creation has a teleology, so history must conform to that teleology. This, however, will not take us very far, and so Augustine's tale of two cities does not presume to explain God's purpose in every detail of recorded history. The second road may travel further, and Edwards' copious *Notes on the Apocalypse* demonstrate his attempts to walk this way. These books, of all Edwards' writings, are perhaps the most foreign to the modern reader, but then the

¹⁴² *Miscellanies* 762, Corol.2.

¹⁴³ Edwards' intention to write a 'body of divinity' under this title is indicated in a letter to the trustees of the College of New Jersey concerning the offer of the presidency of the college. For the text see *YE16* pp.725-730.

¹⁴⁴ Although Edwards would never have consented to such a de-objectifying of the drama of salvation. See my next chapter.

¹⁴⁵ In *Civitas Dei*.

modern reader will not share Edwards' assumption that history is precisely the history of redemption, the unfolding action of God in revealing His glory through the salvation and eternal joy of His elect creatures. If we find it strange or even amusing to read Edwards' attempts to link the 'sixth vial' of Revelation 16:12 with the disruption of the flow of riches from the colonies to Roman Catholic monarchs in his own day,¹⁴⁶ then that may be as much to do with our assumptions that God is powerless in history – paganism – or even that our salvation is out of, rather than through, 'secular' history – gnosticism – as any primitivism on Edwards' part. The third route is the most dangerous, if potentially the most fruitful. Edwards' attempts in this direction involved a further extension of his typological hermeneutic to the events of history in order to show that these, too, could show forth Christ and His saving work, to God's glory. Indeed, if creation and its history are as Edwards has described them, then the events of history must show forth Christ because such events are essentially relationships that God thinks of, which is to say their being is Christologically grounded.¹⁴⁷ And this is no sub-Hegelian logos-mysticism; Edwards, when speaking about Christ, is speaking of the One who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, not of any organising principle of the cosmos – or, better, he is speaking of the One who was crucified under Pontius Pilate *as* the organising Person of the cosmos.¹⁴⁸

I have had cause to comment earlier in this chapter that Edwards will admit no basic ontological distinction other than that between creature and Creator;¹⁴⁹ a further piece of evidence of this commitment will demonstrate just how seriously Edwards takes this theme of the work of Jesus Christ as that around which the universe is organised. A theology that had not been thoroughly emancipated from Greek or Enlightenment

¹⁴⁶ *YES* pp.253-284.

¹⁴⁷ 'Christ God man is not only Mediatour between God and sinfull men but he acts as a middle person between all other persons & all intelligent beings.' *Miscellanies* 781. The assertion is breathtakingly daring, but entirely in accord with Edwards' system.

¹⁴⁸ This is clear from the *History of the Work of Redemption*, which focuses on the events of the gospel narratives: 'And we are now come to the most remarkable article of time that ever was or ever will be. Though it was between thirty and forty years, yet more was done in it than had been done from the beginning of the world to that time. We have observed that all [things] that had been done before were only preparatory for what was done now, and it may be observed that all that was done before the beginning of time in the eternal counsels of God and that eternal transaction there was between the persons of the Trinity, chiefly respected this period.'

YE9 p.294.

¹⁴⁹ pp.90-92 above.

views would see the angels, as the inhabitants of heaven, as perfect and unchanging. Edwards will not. The elect angels are creatures as we are and so are in need of confirmation, and that confirmation comes only through the work of Jesus Christ. Briefly, Edwards argues that it was the awareness of the coming humiliation of Christ that caused the fallen angels to reject God's plans, as they regarded this as unworthy of the Son of God. So, it was appropriate that the test of the elect angels that confirmed their obedience was their submission to the man Jesus Christ as their King. This they could only do at the ascension, so it was only at the completion of the gospel plan that the elect angels were confirmed as elect.¹⁵⁰ It is not just the material creation that finds its history bound up in the life, death, resurrection, ascension and return of Jesus Christ; the heavens themselves depend on Him for their being.

The History of the Work of Redemption, then, describes the history of the world through the hermeneutical key of Jesus Christ. All that happens before the Incarnation is preparatory for His mission, all that happens after is an outworking of what He has done. Edwards is concerned to demonstrate that at every point in history God is applying the salvation found in and through Jesus Christ to men and women. In the first section of the work,¹⁵¹ Edwards discusses the history of the world from the Fall to the Incarnation. The proposition here is that this span of time 'is taken up in doing those things that were forerunners and earnest also of Christ's coming and working out redemption and work preparatory to it.'¹⁵² Whether God's mighty acts of liberation in Old Testament history,¹⁵³ or the rise and fall of the ancient empires,¹⁵⁴ or the actual redemption of individual Israelites,¹⁵⁵ all history in this period was so ordered by God to provide the right conditions for the coming of Christ. But this is not the most striking feature of the discourse: Edwards also insists that the salvation

¹⁵⁰ *Miscellanies* 515 contains substantially this account, but most of the positions are common throughout the *Miscellanies*. Entry 938 in particular makes the same point: 'So it was in Christ God man that the angels have found rest.'

¹⁵¹ pp.113-293.

¹⁵² p.128.

¹⁵³ For instance, Edwards describes the exodus as 'the greatest pledge and forerunner of the future redemption of Christ' and 'the greatest type of Christ's redemption of any providential event whatsoever'. p.175.

¹⁵⁴ 'This period being the last period of the Old Testament and the next to Christ's coming, seems to have been remarkably distinguished from all others in the great revolutions that were among the nations of the earth to make way for the kingdom of Christ.' p.244.

¹⁵⁵ '...all the souls that were saved before Christ came were only as it [were] the earnest of the future harvest.' p.129.

that is wrought by God in these times is only through Christ – He is the one who stands in the place of the mediator, and so all God’s actions are through Him. This is represented as a result of the judgement that followed the Fall: ‘Henceforth, this lower world with all its concerns was as it were devolved upon the Son of God. For when man had sinned, God the Father would have no more to do with man immediately ... He would henceforth have no concern with man but only through a mediator.’¹⁵⁶

A tension with Edwards’ metaphysical thought will be apparent. I have argued that Edwards sees the act of creation as mediated by Son and Spirit; here, there is the (implicit) suggestion that God acted immediately on the original creation. Once again, the provisional nature of the text must be taken into account: this is an unrevised sermon, which cannot be expected to state every point in the most careful manner. The suggestion is no more than implicit, and as it contradicts explicit statements made by Edwards in more carefully considered points,¹⁵⁷ we may assume that it was a slip of phrasing, that would have been eliminated had Edwards lived to revise the text as he intended. The present point, however, is to notice how thoroughly Christocentric Edwards’ account of history is: ‘...when we read in the sacred history what God did from time to time towards his church and people, and what he said to them, and how he revealed himself to them, we are to understand it especially of the second person of the Trinity.’¹⁵⁸ Again, in speaking of the exodus, Edwards insists ‘this redemption was by Jesus Christ’,¹⁵⁹ arguing that Christ appeared in the burning bush, that Christ was in the pillar of cloud and fire, that Christ destroyed the pursuing army in the Red Sea. This whole passage is a remarkable example of the Christological hermeneutic which informs Edwards’ writing; not only is every divine action ascribed specifically to Christ, but the event as a whole is seen as a type of Christ’s redemption, and many of the details are linked to prophecies and details of His life and work. So the burning bush in its details is a type of the incarnation and passion of the Redeemer, the Red Sea a type of baptism, and hence of salvation through being washed in Christ’s blood, and many other images and

¹⁵⁶ p.131.

¹⁵⁷ ‘All works of God are done by the Spirit, but in all works relating to the world he acts as the Spirit of the Son ... So Christ can be called the Author of both the old & new creation...’ *Miscellanies* 958 (unpublished).

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ p.175.

allusions appear in between.¹⁶⁰ History in its grand sweep and its apparently incidental details is ordered by God through Christ to prepare for the greatest act of God in the humiliation of His Son.¹⁶¹

And this is the second of Edwards' three periods of history. It is, as he says, a 'very unequal division', since this 'second period is so much the greatest.'¹⁶² It is, Edwards says, taken up with 'the purchase of redemption.'¹⁶³ Bracketing the question of the appropriateness of the mercantile metaphor, which will be properly considered in the next chapter, the central point that Edwards makes is that the gaining of redemption began on the morning of incarnation, and was completed on the morning of resurrection. Nothing took place before this period, or after it, and the whole of this period – the whole of Christ's life – was taken up with the work.¹⁶⁴ Most of the discussion of this period in the sermon series is taken up with the nature of redemption, a subject that will be dealt with in the next chapter, so I will pass over this section without further comment.

The last, and for my purposes, perhaps the most interesting, of Edwards' divisions covers the time from the resurrection to the end of the world. For the majority of this period there is no revealed interpretation of history, so Edwards was forced to interpret reported history – and the events of his own day¹⁶⁵ – using the hermeneutical tools that he had developed. His first sermon concerning this period is devoted to describing these tools for his listeners.¹⁶⁶ Firstly, he has a general theory of history which will shape his account, as this period is 'all taken up in bringing about the great

¹⁶⁰ pp.175-177. Similar insistences can be found throughout the *Miscellanies*. Entry 663, for instance, (as yet unpublished) accounts for the salvation of the Old Testament saints by asserting that 'it was the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, that was wont to appear & to reveal himself to the people of God of old...'. Again, in entry 691 (also unpublished) he says that 'Christ himself came up on that day out of the Red Sea with the children of Israel in the cloud and the fire.' (§19, p.15 of Schafer transcript). The *Blank Bible* on John 1:18 is also significant: all the theophanies throughout the Old Testament are types of the coming Incarnation; Christ delighted to appear as a man because He delighted in His coming Incarnation.

¹⁶¹ In this work (which, it must be remembered, survives only in sermon-manuscript form, and not as the statement of Christian doctrine which Edwards had intended to produce) Edwards is vulnerable to the charge that he has little place for the Holy Spirit in his account of creation and its history.

¹⁶² p.127.

¹⁶³ p.295.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁵ Although this is more prevalent in the *Notes on the Apocalypse*.

¹⁶⁶ Sermon 18; pp.344-356.

effect or success of Christ's purpose';¹⁶⁷ secondly, he finds prophecies in Scripture relating to this period – those passages which speak of 'the last days', 'the end of the world' and similar;¹⁶⁸ and thirdly, within the discussion of Scripture, is an indication that history will be read typologically in order to produce his account. There are four successive events in the setting up of Christ's kingdom: the destruction of Jerusalem, of the Roman empire, of Antichrist (*i.e.* the papacy) and Christ's coming in glory. 'I would observe,' says Edwards, 'that each of the three former of these is a lively image and type of the fourth and last...'¹⁶⁹

Further details of Edwards' arguments in this section need not detain us; assuming that we are less convinced than he was that Biblical prophecies of the Antichrist refer to the papacy, there is little of interest in the content of his description of history, and the ingenuity of the method should already be clear. My analysis of *History of the Work of Redemption* has sought to provide the data to establish that Edwards had a theology of history. It should be clear enough that he had theological resources to find meaning in historical events, and I indicated earlier that Edwards was concerned to find an ontology of history. Indeed, such a theory was necessary for history to fulfil its basic teleological purpose in his scheme. One final point is worthy of notice: in applying his typological categories to history as well as nature, he has linked the ontology of history with epistemology, and so the existence of historical events is real, and is a result of their being media for communication.¹⁷⁰

A summary seems in order. Edwards lived during the period when 'medieval' conceptions of the world as morally comprehensible were being displaced by 'modern' conceptions of the world as mathematically comprehensible. His own thought was an attempt to embrace the advances being made by natural science whilst holding on to the very robust doctrine of providence he inherited from the Puritan tradition. This, I have argued, he achieved by finding a Trinitarian idealist metaphysic that could underpin Newtonian physics at least as well as the rationalisms

¹⁶⁷ p.344.

¹⁶⁸ pp.346-356.

¹⁶⁹ p.351.

of the *philosophes*. The way was open for him, then, to offer an account of the moral, or teleological, meaning of creation. Edwards sought to do this through a development of the old hermeneutical tool of typology. Combined with his metaphysics, this becomes not just an interpretative, but also an ontological, tool to describe why and how creation – including history – has meaning, and so to demonstrate that creation can fit into the teleological scheme that I described in the previous chapter. Simply, Edwards offered a way to re-assert, whilst accepting and celebrating all the advances made by natural science, that there is no creature so small and abject that it does not represent the goodness of God, or indeed all of God's other attributes. Creation is the display and communication of God's glory, just as it must be for Edwards' account of God's purposes to work.

Finally, some interim conclusions: this account is certainly coherent in its own terms, but is typology really able to bear this amount of weight? The language, after all, seems alien to the current generation of theologians,¹⁷¹ but it could, I suggest, be restated in more familiar language. For Edwards, typology is a category – the category, perhaps – of mediated communication. Because of this, in his metaphysical system, it is also an ontological principle. But God's self-communication, in Edwards' idealist language, is only another way of speaking of the Son. Creation, claims Edwards, with his ontological typology, is a mode of God's self-communication through His Son. And, because God's self-communication is finally a participative category (as the previous chapter explored), creation is a mode of God's self-giving through His Son. For the moment, let us assume that all of Edwards' typological identifications are wrong – and certainly many of them are fanciful enough – still, was he not right to assert the Christological basis of creation, noetically and ontically, and to seek to give some content to that? I have mentioned already the question of the lack of pneumatology in all this; perhaps the only other point of contention would be the assumption that content can be given. The *Nein!* still rings in our ears, after all.

¹⁷⁰ Edwards' vision of the possibilities of mass media was thus not only two centuries earlier than that of his fellow Americans such as Bill Gates, but also considerably more audacious!

¹⁷¹ Although perhaps not so alien as it was to recent generations, thanks to the degree of rehabilitation brought about by (amongst others) Frei and Daniélou (*opera cit.*).

For Edwards' system to work, of course, this content must be given. If God is not glorified by the being of creation, then it has no reason to be. Edwards at least wants his natural theology to be Christian natural theology – of Christ, from Christ, through Christ – and even Barth was prepared to accept that there are 'true words which are not spoken in the Bible or the Church, but which have to be regarded as true in relation to the one Word of God, and therefore heard like this Word, and together with it' and indeed that 'Jesus Christ speak[s] through such words.'¹⁷² Edwards thought he had a way of hearing those words, not a way apart from Jesus Christ, but a way built on the one Word he had heard, which he claimed could, if listened to, give the charism of interpretation necessary to hear the Word in these words too. If he was wrong in this, he was surely not wrong to insist that such words existed, that Jesus Christ gave Himself in creation and its history too, and indeed, that creation was nothing other than the network of such words, the structure of this divine self-giving.

Every structure, according to Jacques Derrida, has its 'point of presence', that 'transcendental signified' which serves to 'orient, balance, and organize the structure.'¹⁷³ Derrida is no fan of such 'points of presence', but let that pass; the question that will perhaps finally determine the value or otherwise of Edwards doctrine of creation is this: where is that point of presence? If, as so often in 'Christian' accounts of history it is an alien theory of history that is used to explain how the gospel story relates to the whole, then it must finally be discarded. But I have suggested throughout that this is not the case: the centre that gives coherence and meaning to the whole is precisely the gospel story. '[A]ll that was done ... in the eternal counsels of God ... chiefly respected *this* period,' says Edwards;¹⁷⁴ 'the sin of crucifying Christ' is precisely 'that on which all other decreed events depend on as their main foundation.'¹⁷⁵ Robert Jenson, in a fascinating discussion of Augustine's understanding of created time as *distentio*, suggests that the only route between idealism and atheism is to insist that this *distentio* is the 'drama, the complex *energeia*

¹⁷² C.D. IV/3.1 p.114.

¹⁷³ See Derrida, Jacques 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences' in Lodge, David (ed.) *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, Longman, London, 1988 pp.108-123, & particularly pp.109-110 for the point and quotations.

¹⁷⁴ YE9 p.294.

¹⁷⁵ *Miscellanies* 762 corol.2.

that the living God *is*.’¹⁷⁶ Edwards allows us to specify this *distentio* in a daring way, with a Biblical text. Time – creation, and its history – can be because, and only because, the Son of God once cried ‘*Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani*’.¹⁷⁷

The question I have set out to put is borrowed from Luther: does Edwards view God’s glory through the Cross? In his account of creation the answer is an unambiguous ‘yes’. There are rough edges and questions in the scheme, unsurprisingly, as what would have been its main statement was unwritten, but in this area Edwards’ account is broadly coherent and satisfying. Creation and its history are ontologically dependent on, connected to, and revelatory of, the gospel story. Perhaps this should not be too surprising; it is a commonplace of Reformed theology that God created in order to fulfil His prior purposes in salvation and damnation, and Edwards’ account of God’s self-glorification assumes this position. In this context, an account of creation should be built and focused on the gospel, but the majority of the tradition failed to be true to itself on this point. Edwards, with the minor questions I have noted, succeeded in linking creation to redemption theologically. The next chapter turns to ask how far he was able to speak of God’s self-glorification in the work of redemption in an equally crucicentric way.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Aspects of a Doctrine of Creation’ in Gunton, Colin E. (ed.) *The Doctrine of Creation* T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1997, pp.17-28, p.27.

¹⁷⁷ Would Jesus have been crucified if humanity had not fallen? No doubt Edwards would insist that it was inevitable that humanity should fall, and so the question is a meaningless one. But one can imagine an answer analogous to that the Fathers gave: distension would have been necessary – Jenson’s argument is that creation can have no being without it – but one could posit a less vicious form of distension, a way for the Son to be incarnate which did not lead to crucifixion. The echoes of Scotus hardly need pointing out.

Chapter 4

'God Glorified in the Work of Redemption'

*Oh wearisome Condition of Humanity!
Borne under one Law, to another bound:
Vainely begot, and yet forbidden vanity,
Created sicke, commanded to be sound:
What meaneth Nature by these diverse Lawes?
Passion and Reason, selfe-division cause:
Is it the mark, or Majesty of Power
To make offenses that it may forgive?
Nature herselfe, doth her own selfe defloure,
To hate those errors she her selfe doth give...¹*

In 1731, two years after his grandfather's death and his consequent elevation as Stoddard's successor, Edwards was invited to give the Public Lecture in Boston. Perry Miller has eloquently explained the reasons for regarding the sermon Edwards preached on that occasion as almost a personal manifesto.² This was Edwards' opportunity to set out his stall publicly: he had succeeded to a significant pulpit, and one regarded with suspicion by the Boston elite; he was, moreover, the grandson of 'Pope' Stoddard, who had made that Northampton pulpit a power-base to rival those in Boston; there was every chance of the lecture being sponsored for publication, and so a lasting statement might be made. Edwards, now 28, was presented with the opportunity to set out his principles, to take his own stand. The short title, the text and the doctrine of the address all demonstrate that the theme of this thesis, God's self-glorification, is central to Edwards' concerns in this manifesto: 'God glorified in man's dependence' was the title; I Corinthians 1:29-31, '...He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord,' was the text; and the

¹ Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke *Chorus Sacerdotum* ll.1-10, taken from Gardiner, H. (ed.) *The Metaphysical Poets* Penguin Classics, Penguin, London, 1972³ pp.36-37.

² Miller, Perry *Jonathan Edwards* (American Men of Letters Series) William Sloane Associates, n.loc., 1949, pp.28-34.

doctrine claimed ‘God is glorified in the work of redemption in this, that there appears in it so absolute and universal a dependence of the redeemed on him.’³

In teaching us to regard this lecture as definitive, however, Miller also set a fashion for seeing the second half of the short title as determinative of the content: it is ‘man’s dependence’ that Edwards’ sought to insist on.⁴ But a consideration of the text and doctrine surely tells against this, still more so a reading of the lecture. Having sought to prove his doctrine, Edwards immediately turns to its use in demonstrating God’s wisdom: even ‘man’s emptiness and misery, his low, lost, and ruined state’ become a means of serving God’s glory. ‘[a]ll is of the Father, all through the Son, and all in the Holy Ghost’ so the three Persons are equally glorified in this work, and any theology that lessens human dependence in any way – the target is clearly Arminianism – robs God of His glory.⁵ Edwards is uncompromising – it is indeed the ‘mark’ and ‘Majesty of Power, to make offenses that it may forgive.’ The dependence of humanity is a means to an end. The end is the glory of God.

So, in soteriology as well, Edwards saw God’s self-glorification as fundamental. This chapter will seek to explore this theme and ask how he sees God as being glorified, whether here, too, the vision of God’s self-glorification is crucicentric. Some structure must be proposed for the material; recognising that Edwards’ Puritan heritage is at least as relevant here as elsewhere, I will seek to order it according to the pattern of the ‘Golden chain’, working from God’s decrees through the work of Christ to human response to God. I will argue that, in common with the Reformed tradition, Edwards offers a Christologically grounded and crucicentric doctrine of salvation, but separates the doctrine of perdition entirely from the person of Christ and the gospel story.

³ The lecture can be found in *BT2* pp.3-7, and the quotations on p.3.

⁴ *loc. cit.*

⁵ The point and quotations are all from the ‘Use’ section, *BT2* pp.6-7.

4.1 The Basis of Redemption: Election and Christology

Beginning with God's decrees, a question is immediately raised: Gerstner, whose account of Edwards' theology is probably the most complete commentary available, cites his infralapsarianism as an apparently accepted fact, on the way to making another point;⁶ Jenson, by contrast, has Edwards 'decidedly' in the same group as the supralapsarian Calvinists.⁷ An exploration of this dispute will provide a convenient way into this theme:

I have already indicated that my own judgement coincides with Jenson's; this is an appropriate point to make clear why. In the tradition that reached Edwards, supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism have something of the character of ideal types – Beza may be cited as an example of the one, and Turretin of the other, but there are many others who stand between these poles. Of particular note is Petrus van Mastricht, not only because his attempt to find a mediating position seems to be regarded as the most successful,⁸ but also because Edwards speaks of Mastricht's *Theoretico-practica Theologia* as better than 'any other Book in the world, excepting the Bible.'⁹ It is inappropriate, then, to ask if Edwards is 'a supralapsarian' or 'an infralapsarian' as if these two positions spanned the range of possibilities. The tradition Edwards inherited from the end of the seventeenth century was exploring positions between the two, and discovering middle ground, and so it is there we should expect to find him.

A cluster of *Miscellanies* entries show that Edwards' attempts to find this mediating position. In *Miscellanies* 700¹⁰ the first move is made: 'God in the decree of election is justly to be considered as decreeing the creature's eternal happiness, antecedently to any foresight of good works, in a sense wherein he does not in reprobation decree the creature's eternal misery, antecedently to any foresight of sin.' There is an asymmetry between election and reprobation: God decrees to elect – to allow certain creatures to

⁶ *Rational Biblical Theology* II.152.

⁷ *America's Theologian* p.45.

⁸ Both Heppie (*Reformed Dogmatics* p.162) and Barth (*C.D.* II/2 pp.132-133) choose Mastricht's position to demonstrate the possibilities for mediation.

⁹ Letter to Joseph Bellamy, 15th Jan. 1746/7 *YE*16 p.217.

¹⁰ Not yet published in *YE*, but §57 of the *Miscellaneous Remarks Concerning the Divine Decrees* (BT2 pp.540) contains an adequate text.

share His glory and happiness – with no other reason than His own love in view; in the decree of reprobation God has sinful creatures in view, and so this decree is necessarily infralapsarian – ‘necessarily’, because of positions Edwards explores in the next entry in this cluster. *Miscellanies* 704¹¹ is largely an explicit discussion of the notion of the ordering of the decrees. Decrees are, of course, not before or after one another in time, but they may be logically, and this in two ways. Firstly, decrees that are means to ends can be regarded as consequent upon the decree of the end that is in view; secondly, if one decree presupposes another, it may be regarded as dependent on the decree of the thing presupposed. So, God’s decree to punish sinful creatures is consequent on both the decree to glorify Himself – the end which this decree is a means to – and the decree that (some) creatures will be sinful – the necessary basis for this decree. Hence, it is infralapsarian. Edwards will not, at this point, accept that glorifying His justice is an appropriate end for God – He rather glorifies His holiness and majesty by means of His justice: ‘The considering of the glorifying of vindictive justice as a meer [*i.e.* pure, simple] end, has led to great misrepresentations, and undue and unhappy expressions about the decree of reprobation. Hence the glorifying of God’s vindictive justice on such particular persons, has been considered as altogether prior in the decree to their sinfulness; yea, to their very beings...’¹² The textual evidence is clear; when he explicitly explores the ordering of the decrees, Edwards asserts the decree of reprobation to be infralapsarian.¹³

What of election? If Edwards’ principles are applied strictly, this should be supralapsarian if it has no logical dependence on the decree of the fall. Edwards is careful to distinguish two aspects: God’s decision that some creatures should share His love is dependent only on God’s ultimate end, here described as ‘glorifying his love and communicating his goodness.’ The decree that this should happen through God being merciful to undeserving creatures, by contrast, is logically dependent on the fall. The fact

¹¹ Not yet published in *YE*, but §58 of the *Miscellaneous Remarks Concerning the Divine Decrees* (BT2 pp.540-542) contains an adequate text.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ The ‘Blank Bible’ on Rom.9:11-13 (‘...Esau I have hated...’) makes the same point, with a reference to Turretin, who was of course a noted proponent of the infralapsarian scheme.

of election is decreed *supra-lapsus*; the form of election *infra-lapsus*. The sterility of argument concerning Edwards' credentials as a supra- or infralapsarian should now be clear.¹⁴

That said, there is an important underlying debate here, which separates Gerstner's reconstruction of Edwards' position from Jenson's. For Gerstner, Edwards would not think of God as the author of sin, a point he claims Edwards saw the 'vital importance of'. Jenson, by contrast, numbers him with those for whom 'the fact of sin is contingent to God's intent to redeem.'¹⁵ In the context of this thesis, the question becomes: is the Fall part of God's self-glorification, or is it only the backdrop against which God carries out His purposes?¹⁶ This, it seems, is an either-or question, with a simple assertion of ignorance offering the only mediating position. This is the question that underlies talk of the lapsarian controversy in both Jenson and Gerstner.¹⁷

At this point, Gerstner's presentation is simply confused. He shows that, for Edwards, evil is necessary to God's schemes and hence part of the decree,¹⁸ and quotes Edwards twice as asserting 'all the sins of men are foreordained and ordered by a wise

¹⁴ Gerstner actually quotes most of the passage I have been expounding as proof of Edwards' infralapsarianism (*Rational Biblical Theology* II.152-156 & 162), and even acknowledges that Edwards 'may seem to be supralapsarian with reference to the decree of election and infralapsarian with reference to the decree of reprobation.' (p.162) But, Gerstner argues, God's decree is to be generally gracious before the fall, and to choose objects of His mercy *infra-lapsus*. Edwards, however, argues on the basis of his metaphysics that God's election is creative ('...the glory of God's love, and the communication of his goodness ... give both ... being and happiness' *Miscellanies* 704), and so specific election precedes creation and fall: 'hence the design to communicate and glorify his goodness and love eternally *to a certain number*, is to be considered as prior ... to their being and fall' (my italics). This metaphysical move answers Turretin's first criticism of supralapsarianism, that 'a non-entity [*i.e. homo creabilis et labilis*] cannot be the object of predestination' (*Inst. Elenc. Theol.* IV.9.9). It also raises a significant question: if this is the case, then are not the elect ontologically other than the reprobate? I will return to this question later.

¹⁵ Both quotations from *loci cit.* in nn.6 and 7 above.

¹⁶ The latter position may be found in Turretin, for whom the purpose of creation was '...the communication and (as it were) the spreading out (*ekstasis*) of the power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator...' – not the justice and mercy of God – '...But after sin had corrupted and disturbed this order entirely, God ... instituted the work of redemption for no other end than to display more magnificently ... the same attributes and with them his mercy and justice.' The Fall was 'only the occasion and end from which God began the counsel of salvation'. *Inst.Elenc.Theol.* IV.9.22.

¹⁷ Perhaps unhelpfully, as several infrapasarrians who held God to have decreed sin can be found in the tradition. For example, see Heidegger, quoted in Heppe, p.146.

¹⁸ *op.cit.* pp.148-149.

providence',¹⁹ and yet insists that Edwards will not see God as the 'author of sin' – without spelling out what might be involved in the last statement which is not asserted by the others. This linguistic gymnastics seems to be aimed at insisting that God was just in decreeing sin – a point Edwards certainly wants to make (and which I shall discuss in the next chapter), but which is not sufficiently made by insisting on the use of words like 'orderer' instead of 'author'.²⁰ Nevertheless, the *Miscellanies* entry Gerstner quotes will answer the question well enough: the crucifixion of Christ was a sin, yet this was God's first and best thought. Therefore God decrees sin, too, for the promotion of His glory. He is the 'author of sin' in any natural sense of that phrase – God thinks of sin, and determines that the world shall be with sin and evil, not without. How God can do this justly is a subsequent question, and should not be allowed to obscure Edwards' uncompromising answer to the first. Sin and evil, too, are part of God's act of self-glorification. So there is a sense in which Edwards must be described as uncompromisingly supralapsarian after all. Regardless of the place of the decree of reprobation, God's first thought is emphatically that He will redeem, not that He will create.²¹

Seven entries after the one Gerstner quotes in this connection, Edwards returns to the theme of the election of Christ. In *Miscellanies* 762 it is an assertion to prove something else – God's decreeing of sin; in entry 769²² Edwards explores what it means to talk about the election of Christ. God elects His Son to mediatorial office through being joined to the man Christ Jesus; God elects this man to mediatorial office through union with His Son, and thus God elects the God-man, Jesus Christ the Lord to be the 'head of

¹⁹ Both quotations on p.150; the phrase is from §12 of the *Miscellaneous Observations Concerning the Divine Decrees* (BT2 p.528), which is a much-reduced version of *Miscellanies* 762, not yet published in any better form.

²⁰ Edwards shows himself impatient of a similarly standard verbal distinction in an unpublished notebook on the doctrines of grace (Beinecke collection Box 15 Folder 1205): 'What God permits, he decrees to permit. If it is no blemish to God to permit sin, then it is no blemish to him to [word crossed out] or intend to permit it...' (p.9 of the notebook; the emphasis is Edwards').

²¹ This could be demonstrated from a multitude of *Miscellanies* entries, but one example will serve: 'The greatest work of God & the end of all other works, and all God's DECREES [are] contained in the Covenant of REDEMPTION' (entry 993, unpublished; this is the first sentence of the entry, and the capitalised words are those under which Edwards indexed the entry in his table).

election and the pattern of all other election'. This last phrase is expounded: election of other creatures (angels and human beings) is contained in the election of Christ. God chooses the elect to be in Christ,²³ and thus they are elected to share the glory to which God has elected Christ. One final point: the God who elects is not the abstract majesty Barth finds so offensive in the tradition; Edwards will again and again speak of the eternal counsels of the Trinity regarding God's purposes in salvation.²⁴

Edwards returns to this theme in *Miscellanies* 1245.²⁵ What, he asks, does it mean to say that we are chosen 'in Christ'? It does not mean that we are chosen because our belief in Christ is foreseen, nor that we are chosen because His act of atonement is foreseen. Again, it cannot mean that we are elected to be in Christ (this is at least a clarification of the position reached in the entry considered in the previous paragraph, if not a modification), nor that we were elected alongside Christ. Instead, insists Edwards, we need to consider God's basic purposes and to understand the text in their light. God's 'special aim in all was to procure one created child, one spouse and body of his Son for the adequate displays of his unspeakable and transcendent goodness and grace.' So, although individuals are elected, they are elected as the Church ('as one body, one spouse, all united in one Head') to receive the benefits of election no other way than in Christ. Edwards presses the metaphor of the body to make his point: every atom of a particular body was chosen by God to be alive, but only in the body, animated by the soul, 'partaking of the vital influence of the Head and vitals of the body'.

So, God chose certain individuals to make up the elect body, the Church, which is vivified by its union with Christ, as His body and His spouse. As these individuals were to be human beings, God elected a human being to be the Head of the body and also the

²² The only currently published version is §48 of the *Miscellaneous Observations Concerning the Divine Decrees* (BT2 pp.538-539), but this is a heavily edited text.

²³ '...we are elected in Christ, as we are elected in his election' (p.6 of Schafer's transcript).

²⁴ For example: *Miscellanies* 993 (as yet unpublished); the *Observations Concerning the Scripture Economy of the Trinity* (in Helm, ed. *Treatise on Grace* pp.77-94), which speaks of the 'mutual free agreement, whereby the persons of the Trinity, of their own will, have as it were formed themselves into a society, for carrying out the great design ...' (p.78); *History of Redemption* which insists 'The persons of the Trinity were as it were confederated in a design and covenant of redemption...' (YE9 p.118).

²⁵ As yet unpublished.

Head of creation (see Ephesians 1:10 which, as Edwards points out, is a part of the same discussion as the phrase 'chosen in Him'). This chosen human being is to 'have the most transcendent union with the eternal *Logos*, even so as to be one person.' So the election of Christ is first; the election of His spouse, or body, next, and the election of the members of that body only third. Jenson's conclusion seems inescapable: 'Edwards' doctrine of election anticipates at most points the justly praised "christological" doctrine of election developed by Karl Barth.'²⁶

Inescapable this may be, but what is not said is also significant: the one point on which Edwards does not anticipate Barth is in fashioning the decree of reprobation Christologically, as well as that of election. My argument in this chapter, and to some extent in the remainder of this thesis, will be that this is finally a very serious omission.

Finally, I should note that an apparent tension with my basic thesis is visible here: I have argued for the priority of God's act of self-glorification in Edwards' thought, and yet here the assertion is made that the first and basic decree is the election through crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This tension is, however, no more than apparent: I have already argued that in his mature thought Edwards sees self-glorification in terms of Christological (and pneumatological) participation; God's primal decision to glorify Himself is not in tension with the first decree that is Christ, rather they are the same decision viewed from two different angles, or described in two different ways. This may be seen explicitly in Edwards in *Miscellanies* 1062, published as the 'Observations Concerning the Scripture Oeconomy of the Trinity, and Covenant of Redemption'.²⁷ Here, Edwards explores how the 'covenant of redemption' – the agreement between Father, Son and Holy Spirit that redemption should be executed this way rather than another²⁸ – relates to the 'natural order of subsistence' of the persons of the Trinity. God's desire to glorify and

²⁶ *America's Theologian* p.106. This anticipation is arguably not such a departure from the tradition as Barth (perhaps) and some Barth scholars (certainly) have seen it: Heppe's synopsis, for instance, can claim 'Of course the person of Christ is the foundation of election. To a certain extent he is the sole object of it...' (*Reformed Dogmatics* p.168).

²⁷ Found in Helm (ed.) *Treatise on Grace* pp.77-98.

communicate Himself is basic, here as elsewhere, and this will inevitably be done in a manner appropriate to the internal Trinitarian relations. For Edwards, the economic Trinity is not so much identical with the immanent Trinity as coherent, or harmonious: it is a relationship of order and beauty, rather than identity (always remembering that beauty is a key category of ontology). The covenant of redemption is subsequent to this, God's inter-trinitarian decision to glorify Himself in this way, not another. Thus, the election of Christ to be the mediator of this redemption is subsequent, but it is inevitable (because beautiful in the light of the Trinitarian life of God) that Christ should be the one elected to be the mediator.²⁹ A similar argument may be constructed concerning the work of the Holy Spirit.

The object of election is Christ. The next stage of the argument, then, must be Christology. It has been one of the themes of this study that Edwards is best understood as within the Reformed tradition, albeit creatively within it, and I suggest that this is as true in Christology as elsewhere. Edwards' doctrine of the person of Christ is built using Reformed categories and themes, and any full account must recognise this. Jenson's discussion of Edwards' Christology is built on comparisons with the Alexandrian tradition and Martin Luther; these are certainly illuminating, but surely the obvious comparisons in formal terms are not Luther or Cyril, but John Owen and Edward Irving.

The genius of Reformed theology from the first has been its insistence on the genuine humanity of Jesus Christ. Calvin's disagreement with the Lutherans over the Eucharist, for instance, depends finally on his insistence that Christ's human body must be localised, because that is what it is to be human.³⁰ Radicalised versions of this doctrine

²⁸ This idea was a commonplace in covenant theology. See Heppe pp.376-379 for the continental tradition and von Rohr, John *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1986 p.44 for the Puritan background.

²⁹ The point is made regularly in the *Miscellanies*, but to cite one example: Christ is fit to be the Mediator because He is 'the middle person between the Father & the Holy Ghost.' *Miscellanies* 772. Edwards once (only, I think) makes the same point concerning the Spirit, in *Miscellanies* 1065.

³⁰ *Inst.* IV.17.30, where ubiquity is described as a 'monstrous notion'. In passing, it is worth noting that this does not confine us to a Zwinglian memorialist view; Calvin claims a real feeding on Christ's body and blood in the Supper, made possible by our being joined to His heavenly presence by the Spirit (IV.17.31-

are found in Owen, who insists that the Logos is in union with the man Jesus mediately, through the Spirit,³¹ and Irving, who agreed with Owen, and further insisted that the humanity of Jesus was fallen humanity.³² Edwards agreed with Owen³³ and anticipated Irving. A long *Miscellanies* entry headed 'Incarnation of the Son of God and Union of the Two Natures of Christ'³⁴ ends with the assertion 'In Jesus, who dwelt here upon earth, there was immediately only these two things: there was the flesh, or the human nature; and there was the Spirit of holiness, or the eternal Spirit, by which he was united to the Logos.' This is Owenite Christology. A sermon on Luke 22:44 asserts 'Christ, who is the Lord God omnipotent ... did not take the human nature on him in its first, most perfect and vigorous state, but in that feeble and forlorn state which it is in since the fall ...'³⁵ and *Miscellanies* 664 asserts that 'the [the angels] saw him [Christ] in the human nature in its mean, defaced, broken, infirm, ruined state, in the form of sinful flesh...'.³⁶ These latter two quotations contain language that could have been found in one of Irving's pronouncements (although perhaps only one of the more temperate!).

Why insist on such positions? Fundamentally, to take with full seriousness the credal affirmation 'He was made man'. This is Owen's central point: 'His divine nature was not unto him in the place of a soul, nor did immediately operate the things which he performed, as some of old vainly imagined.'³⁷ Thus Owen makes all the assertions that Apollinarian Christology is unable to: Christ grew in understanding, learnt new things,

34). In passing, it is interesting to note that an Edwardsean metaphysics can cut through this problem: God declares and knows the elements to be identical with the body and blood of Christ, and that knowledge defines the reality. An interesting account of Edwards' realistic understanding of the Eucharist may be found in Danaher, William J. 'By Sensible Signs Represented: Jonathan Edwards' Sermons on the Lord's Supper' *Pro Ecclesia* VII (1998) pp.261-287.

³¹ *A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit* Bk.II ch.3&4 (see *Works* III pp.159-188); see also Spence, Alan 'Christ's Humanity and Ours: John Owen' in *Persons Divine and Human* ed. Schwoebel C. & Gunton, C.E. T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1991 pp.74-97.

³² See the 'Sermons on the Incarnation' in *Works* vol.V pp.9-446, and also McFarlane, Graham 'Strange News from Another Star: An Anthropological Insight from Edward Irving' in *ibid.* pp.98-119.

³³ By the time he came to write *Miscellanies* 1047, at least, Edwards had read Owen on the Spirit, as in that entry he quotes from the text.

³⁴ *Miscellanies* 487. *YE13* pp.528-532.

³⁵ The sermon is printed in *BT2* pp.866-877; the quotation is from p.866.

³⁶ *Miscellanies* 664 §8 (p.10 of Schafer's transcript). This entry is not yet published in any form.

³⁷ Owen, *op.cit.* p.169.

and acted in power only through the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁸ But there are soteriological imperatives at work also: 'that which He has not assumed He has not healed' insisted Gregory Nazianzen, and (whilst the question did not occur to the Fathers, to the best of my knowledge) the derivation from this of Christ's assumption of fallen human nature is uncomplicated. There is one further reason, characteristically Puritan in its concern with practical theology: if we desire to present Christ as the pattern or example of Christian life – if, that is, we wish to speak *de imitatione Christi* – then we must recognise the true humanity of Christ. This emphasis can certainly be found in Owen, in that the whole structure of his *Discourse*, moving from the work of the Spirit in the life of Christ to the work of the Spirit in believers, demonstrates this theme. Irving asserts a similar point, in arguing that, since Christ performed all His works of power through the Spirit, we should be able to do 'greater things than these' through the same Spirit.³⁹

All three of these points may be found in Edwards – all are, after all, commonplaces of Reformed dogmatics. The denial of the *communicatio idiomatum*, the assertion of the true humanity of Christ (classically in the *extra calvinisticum*, of which the positions outlined above are surely radicalised versions), and so the vision of a genuine possibility and expectation of sanctification, form linked parts of Reformed polemic against the Lutherans.⁴⁰ The sermon on Luke 22:44, for example, which begins with the assertion that Christ's human nature was fallen and weak as ours is, ends with an exhortation to

³⁸ *ibid.* pp.169-172.

³⁹ 'The Church with her Endowment of Holiness and Power' in *Works* vol.V, pp.449-506. See especially pp.459-467.

⁴⁰ This works better with the radical denial of the *communicatio idiomatum* taught by Owen and Edwards than with the more moderate form that was more often held by continental Reformed theologians. Owen and Edwards (along with various others, such as Sibbes or Irving) would insist that Christ took personal identity and nothing else from the divine Son, and so had no superhuman abilities at all. Turretin, by contrast, argues for a real communication of properties from both natures to the person of Christ, whilst resisting what he takes to be the heart of the Lutheran view, that there is an abstract communication between the two natures. So Jesus Christ can be properly described as omnipotent, but the human nature of Jesus Christ cannot. *Inst.Elenc.Theol.* XIII.8.

come before the Father in prayer as He did. This is a standard form of application for Edwards,⁴¹ as for all Reformed preachers.⁴²

The key Christological question concerns the description of the union of the two natures in Christ. Here, Edwards is able to cut through much that is complicating: the discussion in the last chapter showed that, for Edwards, created being is in being known and loved by God. An obvious corollary, and one Edwards draws in *Original Sin*,⁴³ concerns personal identity, which ‘depends on God’s sovereign constitution’.⁴⁴ That is, I am continuous with my earlier self because God knows me to be so, and for no other reason. The argument in *Original Sin* concerns imputation: the unity of the human race with Adam is established on the same ground as my personal identity with myself. If I can be held guilty of the sins I committed yesterday, then I can be held guilty of the sin of Adam in the same way.⁴⁵ When applied to the union of the two natures in Christ, this ontology reinforces other positions: ‘God hath respect to this man and loveth him as his own Son; this man hath communion with the Logos, in the love which the Father hath to him as his only begotten Son. Now the love of God is the Holy Ghost.’⁴⁶ Trinitarian ontology and Owenite (*i.e.* Trinitarian) Christology cohere in Edwards’ thought in a remarkable way.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Examples abound, but consider the ordination sermon for Job Strong (June 28, 1749) ‘Christ the example of Ministers’ (BT2 pp.960-965), containing phrases like ‘this example was set for us in our own nature, and so is especially fitted for our imitation’ (p.963). Of particular interest is a notebook (Beinecke collection Box 21 Folder 1259) entitled ‘Christ’s Example’ which contains a list of Scriptures showing examples of moral virtue in Christ’s life. The title makes the intended use clear.

⁴² No doubt preachers from other traditions regularly make similar points, but there is a coherence with the sort of Reformed dogmatics that Edwards held to which is lacking elsewhere. A preacher who held to the *communicatio idiomatum*, even in its moderate Reformed form, for example, surely could not exhort her hearers to do what Jesus did in the same uncomplicated manner, as the question would always arise: was this simply a human act, or was this a result of the working of properties I can never hope to obtain?

⁴³ YE3 pp.397-405.

⁴⁴ *ibid.* p.399.

⁴⁵ This point will be more fully discussed in ch.5 *infra*.

⁴⁶ *Miscellanies* 487 (YE13 p.529).

⁴⁷ The same point may be found regularly in the *Miscellanies*. To cite merely two examples, in entry 764b (as yet unpublished), the hypostatic union is said to be ‘the consequence of God’s communicating his Spirit without measure to [Christ’s] human nature, so as to render it the same person with him that is God’; in entry 958 (also unpublished) Edwards asserts that ‘All the endowments of both nature and græ which Christ had were given him of the Father for all are of the Spirit ...’. See also entries 614, 713, 737, 766 and 1043, amongst others.

However, Edwards will not allow the position to be that simple, at least in the *Miscellanies* entry under discussion. A second way in which the two natures are united is postulated: 'Tis not just any communion of understanding and will that makes the same person, but the communion of understanding is such that there is the same consciousness.'⁴⁸ Locke's influence is felt, and personal identity demands identity of consciousness,⁴⁹ so 'the man Christ Jesus was conscious of the glory and blessedness the Logos had in the knowledge and enjoyment of the Father before the world was, as remembering of it (John 17:5).'⁵⁰ Jenson gives a cautious welcome to this theme: 'neither the speculative vigour nor the exegetical difficulty ... can be missed ... it may well be that on *any* modern understanding of personhood Jesus' union with the Logos must be, as Edwards supposes, "doubtless ... some union of the faculties of his soul".'⁵¹

Let me put aside 'modern understandings of personhood', for a moment at least. 'Speculative vigour' is hardly unusual in Edwards; 'exegetical difficulty' is more so. Also unusual, and also not to be missed, is a theological incoherence. Edwards' argument here is an attempt to hold on to the genuine humanity of Christ ('Perhaps there is no other way of God's dwelling in a creature but by his Spirit'); and now we are presented with a baby who knows what it is to be God. Or with a dying man crying in agony 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' whilst knowing all the while that His perichoretic unity with the Father remains undamaged. These may be acceptable (or necessary) deductions from an Alexandrian or Lutheran Christology (hence, one presumes, Jenson's welcome), but they stand in simple opposition to Reformed theology in its radical (Owenite) form.

I have had cause to insist more than once in this thesis that Edwards' *Miscellanies*, significant as they are, must not be taken as finished or polished statements of his theology. They are ideas, drafts, interesting points that he thought merited further

⁴⁸ *ibid.* Again, this point recurs in the *Miscellanies* - entry 738 (unpublished), for example.

⁴⁹ For this point in Locke, see *Essay* II.27.10 (vol. 1 pp.450-451 of Fraser's edition).

⁵⁰ *Miscellanies* 487 (YE13 p.529).

⁵¹ *op.cit.* p.121 (italics are original; the final quotation is from *Miscellanies* 487, and the elipsis is Jenson's).

consideration in the future. There is an incoherence here, based on two different conceptions of what constitutes personal identity. From his own metaphysics, Edwards was led to Owenite Christology; from Locke's arguments he was led to a Lutheran form. He apparently never resolved this. Even in *Original Sin*, continuity of consciousness is still necessary to identity, even if it is subordinated to, and guaranteed by, divine decision. Perhaps, as Jenson says, this must be true of 'any modern understanding of personhood.'

Let me, however, change the emphasis: is the problem not that it is any *modern* understanding of personhood that this must be true of? In particular, a way around this may be found in the theological accounts of personhood that have been so important in recent years (whether 'postmodern' or 'a-modern'). Outside modernity, outside Descartes' incipient solipsism, the assertion that relationality is definitive (or constitutive; the debates need not concern us at this point) of personhood allow a robust assertion that Edwards' own ontology is enough. I remain myself and not other because God relates to me as one. I do not need to know myself to be continuous for that to be true.⁵² Outside modernity, that is to say, there is no need for the incoherence and the exegetical difficulty Edwards introduces; the man Christ Jesus is one with the Logos because the Father knows Him to be His Son and loves Him as His Son.

4.2 The Process of Redemption: Atonement

This, then, is the Christ who is the object of election. The next stage is to describe Edwards' account of what Christ is elected to do – his doctrine of atonement. It is something of a surprise here to find how little systematic treatment is offered by Edwards; the doctrine is everywhere assumed, certainly, but not often discussed at any length; and the two major discussions that are present in the corpus are interesting partly

⁵² From the point of view of philosophy, one may question whether Locke's attempts to evade the question of amnesia are wholly successful. More pointedly, I as a pastor have encountered many Christian believers who do not know themselves (theologically or existentially) to be 'one with Christ'; yet I persist in my belief that God's knowledge of their being is decisive.

because they disagree. I will consider each briefly in turn, before offering some interpretative remarks.

The central section of the *History of the Work of Redemption*⁵³ deals with the time between Christ's incarnation and His resurrection (the ascension may have been a better choice, but let that pass). The proposition argued for is 'from his incarnation to his resurrection, the purchase of redemption was made.'⁵⁴ This proposition immediately highlights the two major points of interest in the discussion: that atonement is the work of the years of the incarnation, not just the hours of the passion; and that the controlling metaphor is mercantile.

There are two aims to Christ's work of redemption: satisfaction, or the 'paying of a debt', and merit, or the 'purchase' of benefits.⁵⁵ These are both carried out throughout Christ's life, the one by the suffering and humiliation He underwent, and the other by the obedience to the Father He offered. Throughout these sermons, Edwards spells out in some detail how the various events and experiences of Christ's life answer to these two ends, the purpose clearly being to insist that the details of the life of Christ are part of the gospel story, rather than just the fact of the death of Christ. It is striking in these passages just how prevalent the mercantile metaphors are, particularly in regard to the second purpose of Christ's work. Merit is almost always spoken of in terms of the 'purchase' of a benefit; satisfaction, by contrast, is often described in judicial metaphors, although the 'payment' of a 'debt' remains a recurring image.

The second discussion that Edwards left is in the *Miscellanies*, entries 1352 and 1360.⁵⁶ Here, Edwards is concerned to argue that it is 'reasonable and natural' for a 'patron' to intercede on behalf of a 'client' and that, as a result of this intercession, the patron's

⁵³ YE9 pp.294-343.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.295.

⁵⁵ p.304.

⁵⁶ As yet unpublished, but §3 of the *Miscellaneous Remarks on Satisfaction for Sin* offers an adequate text: parts 1-11 are entry 1352 and parts 12-19 are 1360. This text may be found in BT2 pp.570-573. *Miscellanies* 1070 (also unpublished) shows Edwards moving towards this position, and contains (I think) the first reference to 'benefactors' as a metaphor for the atonement.

‘merit’ with a third party may be transferred to (or shared by) the client. Edwards attempts to construct a calculus of such personal relationships, emphasising the union of patron and client that can be formed by the former considering the latter’s interests his (or her) own, and the naturalness of the ‘friend’ regarding the client for the sake of an esteemed and loved patron.⁵⁷ As we are made one with Christ by His love for us, and by our spiritual union with Him, so it is not strange, but most natural for God to apply Christ’s benefits to us; for, that is, atonement to happen. The metaphor now is one of personal relationships, and the emphasis is on the reasonableness of the proceedings.

This last point is important: the rationality, or beauty, of God’s atoning action is central to Edwards. Gerstner, in his discussion of Edwards’ understanding of the atonement, seems to have missed this, and so finds the texts riddled with evidences of a Grotian, ‘moral government’ theory with which he is distinctly uncomfortable. He has most difficulty with *Miscellanies* 306: ‘According to M 306, if God did not punish sin, “nobody could charge God with any wrong.” How could an Anselmian like Edwards say that? ... pure governmentalism follows fast: “As God’s nature inclines him [to] order all things beautifully properly and decently, so it was necessary that sin should be punished ... There is this necessity, besides that which arises from the veracity of God”.’⁵⁸ Edwards is certainly here rejecting the assumption that God has any need to act justly, rather than mercifully (an ‘Anselmian’ position, in Gerstner’s terms), but he is not embracing the idea that God only chooses to punish sin because there was a need for God’s law to be seen to be upheld, having once been promulgated (‘governmentalism’).⁵⁹ Rather, Edwards is reverting to key categories of beauty and decency to insist that,

⁵⁷ As may be expected, precursors of this attempt can be found earlier in the corpus. *Miscellanies* 604, for example, asserts that ‘It was a thing infinitely honourable to God that a person of infinite dignity was not ashamed to call him his God & to adore & obey him as such...’ (this entry has not yet been published). Although those for whom Christ acts are not mentioned here, there is the beginning of an attempt to understand what Christ has done using the logic of interpersonal relationships.

⁵⁸ *Rational Biblical Theology* II.435-436; the *Miscellanies* text Gerstner is quoting can be found in *YE* 13 p.391.

⁵⁹ Edwards has no problems with a ‘moral government’ theory, and indeed invokes such ideas more than once, but it is not the most important metaphor for the atonement in his writings. An example, however: there is a minor thread in the notebooks concerning God’s curse on Adam, ‘Thou shalt surely die’. In a variety of *Miscellanies* entries around 1050-1100, this threat is offered as the reason that Christ had to die, which is indeed pure ‘governmentalism’.

although He is not required to act justly, it is appropriate to God's nature so to act, and so He inevitably will.⁶⁰

Two points seem constant: Edwards wants to see the whole life of Jesus as redemptive, not just His death, and to insist on the rationality – or appropriateness – of the atonement. What is different, and markedly so, is the controlling metaphor used in the two discussions. It would be possible, at this point, to notice the chronological order, breathe a sigh of relief, and assert that Edwards put away crass economic language for the far richer pictures of personal relationship; after all, mercantile language sounds simply unworthy to be used to describe Christ's work to modern ears. I believe, however, that there is something to be learnt from giving attention to this disagreement, as I see an underlying continuity in the two accounts.

Edwards' concern in both pieces, I suggest, is to argue for the rationality of the atonement in personal terms. Perhaps the key point here is that it is not abstract 'Justice' or even 'Goodness' that must be satisfied, but that, for Edwards, what goes on in the life, death and resurrection of Christ must make sense as a relational event between Christ, His Father, and the elect. Just as legal metaphors are radically depersonalised in the movement from feudal to modern society, so Edwards' first, mercantile, metaphor can be seen as a picture of personal relationships in a context where money retains its old function of smoothing the interpersonal exchanges of goods, knowledge and skill that would have happened in any case. So 'purchase,' 'debt' and similar terms do not function as abstract economic metaphors, but as ways of describing the interpersonal activities and obligations that would be familiar to the hearers of Edwards' sermon series. If, as seems likely given his friendship with John McLeod Campbell, Edward Irving had

⁶⁰ The classic aesthetic argument concerning the atonement in the tradition, of course, is Anselm's suggestion that the saints are redeemed to make up the perfect number of inhabitants for heaven after the fall of the angels (*Cur Deus Homo?* I.16-18). I am not aware of any evidence that Edwards had read Anselm, or even of a survival of this idea in the Reformed tradition, but it is interesting to discover that Edwards at one point makes the same argument: the saints will 'fill up the room that was left vacant in heaven by their [viz. evil angels] fall...' *Miscellanies* 616 (unpublished). In another context, this sort of aesthetics is even offered as the reason for the resurrection: 'For if God appointed his Son to redeem mankind from the calamities & miseries that are come upon them by the fall, tis most meet that this

Edwards partly in mind with his jibe about 'stock-exchange divinity', it may be that he was missing the very pertinent point that Edwards used trade language in a society that did not have a stock exchange!

So, I suggest that the mercantile language is an earlier (and, I think, less satisfactory) version of the same project that Edwards is about in the *Miscellanies* texts – the attempt to show that a personal/relational rationality underlies the Christian doctrine of atonement.⁶¹ This, surely, is also the import of the various uses of, and modifications to, traditional Reformed covenant language in Edwards:⁶² that the 'grace' which Christ 'purchased' from the Father is the indwelling Spirit, rather than some list of 'benefits' is no more than an insistence that atonement is personal.⁶³

This emphasis appears to have enabled Edwards to appropriate the best insights of the Reformed tradition when asking about what benefits are gained by Christ's atoning work. Classically a distinction had been drawn between justification and sanctification, and the problem faced by any theologian (or preacher) of salvation was to navigate between antinomianism, the ever-present danger facing Puritan theology, and the doctrine of salvation by works, which was seen as the chief error of the Church of Rome. Calvin's answer to this problem had been to insist that justification and sanctification were two

redemption should be compleat, and that all the evils of the fall should be abolished & delivered from of which one is death.' (*Miscellanies* 608, as yet unpublished).

⁶¹ This is the attempt in these texts, at least. In Edwards' overall conception the argument is turned on its head, as has been implicit in earlier chapters and will become explicit before the end of this one. It is not so much that the atonement is a rational form of personal relationship; rather that particular forms of personal relationship are rational because they resonate or harmonize with the gospel story.

⁶² Whether Edwards can properly be called a 'covenant theologian' (or 'federal Calvinist') or not, seems to me to be a sterile question, depending more on the definition and delimitation of such terms than on any insight into his theology. For a glimpse of the debate, see pp.13-17 of Paul Helm's 'Introduction' to the *Treatise on Grace*. *Miscellanies* 1091 is an attempt to find a mediating position between different varieties of covenant theology, and so might be the best source for a consideration of Edwards' doctrine of the covenants.

⁶³ It is true that Edwards' immediate reason for making this move in the *Treatise on Grace* is to demand 'equal glory' for the Spirit with the Father and the Son in the work of redemption – a point I will return to later in this chapter – and this should not be minimized, but the entire *Treatise* is devoted to the argument that saving grace is not some impersonal 'stuff' but the personal Spirit, and so the wider context admits and demands the interpretation which I am offering.

results of one prior reality, viz. union with Christ.⁶⁴ Whilst this insight was never wholly lost in the tradition, there is a sense in much post-reformation soteriology that judicial declaration has replaced personal union as the centre of the scheme, and the ‘golden chain’ of Romans 8:30 became a standard way of ordering such decrees. The most telling example of this, perhaps, is the relationship between justification and adoption: in Calvin, and in Edwards, these are parallel benefits;⁶⁵ in much of the tradition between, by contrast, adoption is a result of justification.⁶⁶

Edwards’ earlier discussions of the benefits that were won by Christ’s atoning acts focused on the gift of the Spirit; the later focus is on incorporation into Christ.⁶⁷ This, once again, is not so much a change of mind as a refining of focus: it is incorporation into Christ that is the first and most proper work of the Spirit in the believer. Two systematic points stand out here: firstly, returning to the vision of Trinitarian overflow that I found to be basic to Edwards’ concept of God’s self-glorification, it is noteworthy that both the gift of the Spirit and incorporation into the Son are only possible because of this rich vision of the dynamism of God’s life. Because God communicates Himself, we can speak of union with Him - speak, that is of on the one hand the Spirit indwelling us and on the other of our indwelling of Christ. Secondly, the questions about the nature of personal identity which I discussed earlier in this chapter are of some help in understanding these points: understanding the (admittedly Biblical) language of ‘incorporation’ into Christ is not always easy, but in Edwards’ scheme it is trivial: God regards the believer as one with Christ so, ontologically, the believer is one with Christ.

⁶⁴ So, for instance, Calvin’s first statement concerning the work of the Spirit: ‘he is called the “spirit of adoption” because he is the witness to us of the free benevolence of God with which God the Father has embraced us in his beloved only-begotten Son to become a Father to us...’ *Inst.* III.1.3

⁶⁵ Calvin, *Inst.* III.11.6: ‘Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption, by whose power he remakes them to his own image.’ For the same point in Edwards, see for example *Miscellanies* 1093 (unpublished).

⁶⁶ See, for example, Wollebius (see Beardslee, *Reformed Dogmatics* pp.157-176) or Turretin 15-17 (see especially 16.4-6, where Turretin explicitly states that adoption is a result of justification, rather than *vice-versa*).

⁶⁷ This shift in focus can perhaps be best seen by reading the *Miscellanies* in chronological order.

Under the metaphysical positions with which Edwards was working, it really is that simple.⁶⁸

Atonement is to be understood using a logic that is personal and relational. The results of atonement are in terms of personal union between the believer and the tri-personed God. Thus far in the exposition there is no hint that atonement is limited; this is, I think, significant. The logic of Edwards' theology in the areas of atonement, Christology and even predestination nowhere demands a limited salvation – the last because of the move that makes Christ the primary object of predestination. Edwards did, of course, hold to a doctrine of limited atonement – there was no other position admissible in New England Puritanism – but there is textual evidence that he was uncomfortable with the idea, which I shall highlight later. However, the effect of introducing a doctrine of limited atonement alongside the positions I have just outlined is striking: the gospel story becomes a relational narrative featuring Jesus, the Father, the Spirit and the elect. The rest of humanity (and, incidentally, the non-human creation) are excluded from this narrative, and so live their lives unconnected with the gospel. Here, then, the problem that I indicated in my consideration of Edwards' doctrine of predestination has consequences: if Christ is not connected to the reprobate as well as the elect, then the gospel has nothing to say about the reprobate. The most unacceptable results of this theology will become clear later in this chapter; for now, I will turn to Edwards' arguments for the doctrines of grace.

Edwards' defence of the Calvinist scheme is built on an analysis of human fallenness and liberty, rather than a doctrine of predestination. Having analysed God's action in atonement, a discussion of these texts will form a necessary excursus before I explore the application of atonement in justification, faith, and sanctification. That is, conversion, at

⁶⁸ I am here assuming that Edwards' Lockean insistences on continuity of consciousness being necessary to personal identity were a mistake; they certainly complicate this point greatly.

least in Edwards' scheme, is probably best understood by examining what it is a turning from before looking at what it is a turning to.⁶⁹

Two major texts are significant in this area: *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin*. The latter will be treated in some detail in the next chapter; for now it will suffice to record that Edwards defends traditional positions concerning universal depravity and imputation, although the latter is defended in a novel way, as has already been indicated. The argument in *The Freedom of the Will* is essentially that the freedom that human beings possess, when properly understood, is not inconsistent with our actions being predictable or even necessitated – not incompatible, fundamentally, with predestination. This is established by means of language analysis: 'the will' is simply 'that by which the mind chooses anything',⁷⁰ and so an 'act of will' is simply a choice. Given this, Edwards can assert that the will is determined by the strongest motive, in the view of the mind.⁷¹ The image of a pair of traditional balance scales is not inappropriate here; I have a series of inducements to act one way or another, and (what I judge to be) the strongest set of inducements inevitably determine my choice. So, 'the will always is as the greatest apparent good is.'⁷² 'Freedom', as commonly used, is simply the ability to do what we choose,⁷³ and so something may only be described as free if it possesses the ability to choose – if it possesses a will. So the will itself is not free, because it does not possess a will of its own; a person, by contrast, may properly be described as free, as one who does possess a will. This, briefly stated, is the position for which Edwards is arguing.

Edwards is aware, of course, that he will not carry the argument that easily, so the second part of the work turns to examining the opposing arguments. The basic position in this area is not so much that the 'liberty of indifference' claimed by his opponents is wrong as that it is nonsensical: '... to talk of liberty, or the contrary, as belonging to the very will

⁶⁹ This might be seen as a weakness, but I suspect it is merely another example of Edwards' contextual theology. His understanding of conversion is decisively influenced by his experience of preaching, where this is the natural way round to work.

⁷⁰ *YEI* p.137.

⁷¹ p.141.

⁷² p.142.

⁷³ p.163.

itself is not to speak good sense ...'⁷⁴ Asking whether the will is free or not is equivalent to asking if it is purple or not, and discussions based on this starting point are as likely to be useful! He asserts that the notion of 'free will' held by 'Arminians, Pelagians and others, who oppose the Calvinists' consists of three assertions: the self-determining power of the will; the indifference of the mind prior to the act of will; and the 'contingency' of the act of will, meaning that there is nothing that can be said to have 'caused' it.⁷⁵ The first of these assertions is simply incoherent, asserts Edwards; it can only mean that the person determines her own will, since the will is (as previously established) not an agent that can determine anything. But for a person to determine her own will, she must exercise choice, so every act of will is determined by a previous act of will. Edwards demonstrates the infinite regress by means of a *reductio ad absurdum*, positing a first act of will in the chain.⁷⁶ The assertion of the mind's indifference is again not so much wrong as incoherent: we are asked to suppose that, at the very moment of choosing one thing over another, our minds are indifferent as to which of the two we should choose. Finally, the uncaused nature of choice (and, indeed, several attempts to evade his reasoning on the first two points which Edwards has explored along the way) establishes nothing. All that could be inferred if it were granted would be that from time to time the will randomly moves towards some thing or another, with no motive, no morality, no rational understanding possibly lying behind the movement, by definition.⁷⁷

At various points in the text, Edwards returns to his analysis of the notion of 'cause'. The most important issue here is the division into 'moral' and 'natural' cause. Moral causes are internal to the person choosing – a like or dislike; a moral imperative that is held in high esteem; a sense of some advantage to be gained by moving one way or the other. Natural causes are external – a gun held to my head or a locked prison door.⁷⁸ This

⁷⁴ p.163.

⁷⁵ pp.164-165.

⁷⁶ p.172.

⁷⁷ p.179. Were they better-versed in the history of philosophy, this point might give pause to those writers who regularly assail the public with arguments that the apparent randomness of certain quantum events makes room for 'genuine' human freedom in the scientific universe.

⁷⁸ Clearly there are grey areas in this definition, concerning the effect of mental illness and the like. The extent that these correspond to important ethical questions concerning 'diminished responsibility' will demonstrate the usefulness of Edwards' analysis.

distinction is vital for Edwards, and provides an epigrammatic way of stating his position: since the will merely weighs up conflicting motives, and comes down on the side of the strongest, and freedom is no more than the ability to do what I want, Edwards can insist that a free choice is one which is caused only by moral causes, a constrained choice one caused, in part at least, by natural causes.

So much for the argument of *The Freedom of the Will*; what are we to make of it? In this book Edwards is working almost entirely philosophically, rather than theologically (although the boundaries were less clearly drawn in his day). The strongest evidence for this lies in the fact that the first reference to Jesus Christ occurs 175 pages into the text. It is, then, perhaps unsurprising that the arguments appear less compelling in a different philosophical climate. The method of language analysis, for example, must assume that only one language game operates, or at least that one is privileged, or there is no 'ordinary language' to analyse, and so the analysis of 'ordinary language' is not a possible or appropriate activity. After Wittgenstein and MacIntyre, however, it seems difficult to make this assumption. What we call 'ordinary language' is a patchwork of elements of different language games that have become common. Each square of the quilt is itself a partial, and so probably incoherent, subset of a wider game (one might think of the elements of psychological or psychoanalytical language that have passed in to public usage, for example), and the different squares certainly lack coherence with each other. So, even if we could isolate something that we could regard as 'the' common language of our society, Edwards' position relies on the assumption that this language game will produce meaningful and non-contradictory results when subjected to rigorous philosophical analysis. Perhaps Edwards did live in a society where the day-to-day discourse was sufficiently unified and philosophically robust to withstand such analysis, but to simply assume that this is the case seems rather difficult today. Edwards' mode of argument cannot be considered compelling in the (post)modern world.

So, must the *Freedom of the Will* be put to one side, a brilliant piece of analysis relying on premises that are no longer tenable? I think not. The mode of argument is open to

attack, but the work contains resources that suggest a different way of arguing similar conclusions, one that is theologically grounded. In Part III Sections 1 and 2⁷⁹ Edwards is addressing the question of whether necessity is incompatible with praise- or blameworthiness. He does this by asserting that God is necessarily holy, and yet still praiseworthy (III.1), and that the holiness of Jesus Christ is again both necessary and praiseworthy (III.2). In the first of these sections, the argument is that God, of all beings, is worthy of praise, and yet He is also necessarily holy – so necessity cannot be a bar to moral worth. It would be equally cogent to argue that God, of all beings, is *free*,⁸⁰ yet necessarily holy, and so freedom is not incompatible with necessity.⁸¹ If God's freedom consists in the freedom to be who He is, then we cannot claim for ourselves any 'higher' freedom.⁸²

In the second section, Edwards seeks to establish that it was indeed necessary for Christ to be holy, on the basis of the prophecies and promises of God given beforehand that He would be, and on the basis of His divine nature. Such arguments are clearly powerful from any position which, like Edwards', holds to a strong doctrine of the divine decrees. He next insists that Christ's actions are praiseworthy, and offers a similar argument to the one sketched above, which invites a similar reconstruction. This reconstruction becomes all the more forceful in the light of Barth's fundamental reorientation of anthropology: if we define humanity by looking at Christ, then the few pages of exegesis in this section offer a theological basis for the whole. Christ was, as Edwards argued, necessarily holy; His holiness was praiseworthy; to be praiseworthy it must have been freely entered into; thus in Christ we see a freedom that is compatible with necessity. Edwards finds an example here, but it is possible to find a definition: we only know what it means to be human as we look to Christ, so *this* freedom, subject to necessity as it is, is definitive of true human freedom.

⁷⁹ YE1 pp.277-294.

⁸⁰ Although Edwards does suggest that some of his opponents are denying this: pp.277-278 & 203 n.1. Later in the text he will assert that 'God himself has the highest possible freedom.' p.364.

⁸¹ Edwards comes near to making this argument in his discussion of the necessity of the divine will: pp.375-383.

⁸² In Edwards' terms this necessity for God to be holy is of course a moral necessity – inevitable because beautiful, in the light of God's triune self.

I therefore suggest that, by invoking theological arguments like these, Edwards' arguments may be given foundations that are perhaps more lasting than those which he offers from the philosophical methods of his day. As a parenthesis, one final criticism suggests itself: if the argument suffers from being philosophical, then it is surely no surprise that the conclusion does so too. Edwards' definition of freedom is based on the meaning of the word in common speech, not what it means in the New Testament. There, *ελευθερος* and its cognates are soteriological words; freedom is a category of Christian being, not a category of 'natural' human being. It is the freedom to serve God as a child of God – to borrow another insight from Barth, to live as children of God is our only possible way of living; any other existence must be in some sense inauthentic, unreal and impossible.⁸³

This position may appear to be radically different from that of Edwards, but actually differs on only one point: the nature of the moral agent. Edwards defines a moral agent as a 'being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality, and which can properly be denominated good or evil in a moral sense'.⁸⁴ In this, a certain autonomy is assumed, but theologically (as Edwards well knew) the nature of humanity is fundamentally contingent: we are created by and for God, determined to serve God and to live as children of God. This, surely, must be relevant to a discussion of human freedom. If we paraphrase Edwards' position as 'freedom is the freedom to be who you are', the point becomes clear: we are, at least in part, that for which we are determined; as such to live in any other way than as a child of God is to be something less than free. A felicitous expression of this occurs in an unexpected source, when the (now sanctified) soul of Gerontius says '...for I feel in me ... a sense of freedom, as I were at length myself, and ne're had been before'.⁸⁵

⁸³ See especially *C.D.* II/2 pp.349-354.

⁸⁴ *YEI* p.165.

It may be argued that only the elect are determined to live as children of God, but this raises again the problem that I am concerned to expose in this chapter: if human ontology is (even in part) teleologically defined, and if this is not true of all humanity, then the reprobate are ontologically other than the elect and so not truly human.⁸⁶ Now, Edwards' ontology as I have sketched it in the previous two chapters clearly has a teleological component – the end of all being is the End when God is glorified through the *ekstasis* of Son and Spirit to His creatures – so this is a genuine problem. I will return to this theme, but first my exposition of Edwards' account of the doctrines of grace needs completion.

On the basis of his analysis of the nature of freedom, Edwards feels able to deal with the five points of traditional Calvinism in little more than one paragraph each. His argument in each case is similar: the doctrines are generally accepted to be the most natural way of understanding Scripture, but it has been held that they are logically difficult, usually because of a commitment to an understanding of freedom of the sort Edwards has been concerned to debunk, so in each case he may insist on the doctrine by showing how the objections to it rely on that particular account of freedom. Thus, the major objection to the doctrine of total depravity is that it is inconsistent with free will, but Edwards has shown this to be a meaningless term, and there is no inconsistency between total depravity and freedom as he has defined it, so that the doctrine may stand, at least until further objections are raised. Turning to irresistible grace, so long as this is understood to create a moral, rather than a natural, necessity of acting, it is also consistent with human freedom as defined by Edwards and so again may remain.⁸⁷ The same arguments may be made in relation to unconditional election and the final perseverance of the saints.

Turning finally to limited atonement, Edwards' comments are worth quoting at length, as they indicate that uneasiness with the doctrine that I commented on earlier:

⁸⁵ In the first speech of the soul in part II of the abridged version of the *Dream of Gerontius* that Elgar used for his libretto.

⁸⁶ See n.13 above for the same charge made in a slightly different way.

⁸⁷ The same point is made in a different way in *Miscellanies* 665 (unpublished), where Edwards argues that irresistible grace does not imply that the will cannot resist, since grace acts on the will, and so the will just will not oppose the workings of grace. The argument in the *Freedom of the Will* adds only that this is not an infringement of the convert's freedom, properly understood.

From these things it will inevitably follow, that however Christ in some sense may be said to *die for all*, and to redeem all visible Christians, yea, the whole world by his death; yet there must be something *particular* in the design of his death, with respect to such as he intended should actually be saved thereby ... God pursues a proper design of the salvation of the elect in giving Christ to die, and prosecutes such a design with respect to no other, most strictly speaking; for 'tis impossible, that God should prosecute any other design than only such as he has: he certainly don't, in the highest propriety and strictness of speech, pursue a design that he has not ... for 'tis as impossible, in strictness of speech, that God should ...⁸⁸

Not only the insistence on a genuinely universal ('the whole world') sense to the work of redemption, but also the constant qualifiers concerning strictness of speech, indicate that Edwards, whilst certainly wanting to hold to the theological point, is unhappy with the mode of expression. In *Miscellanies* 424⁸⁹ Edwards is working at the same point, and suggesting that there is genuinely a universal component to the atonement, that by it all people should 'have an opportunity of being saved'. The doctrine of limited atonement is both important and difficult for Edwards, because he was (rightly) so impressed with the magnitude of the sacrifice of Christ. This must be to accomplish something definite, rather than merely establishing a possibility, and a doctrine of limited atonement offers this certainty. On the other hand, the same vision of the magnitude of Christ's death leads him to struggle with the idea that anything could remain untouched by it. I will suggest later that in both cases his theological instinct was sound, and that there may be another way through the problem. For now, however, I merely observe that Edwards' unease is surely related to the ontological questions I have been raising in this chapter: if, as I have argued Edwards held, the whole of the being of creation is defined by the gospel story, then the being of the reprobate must be so defined, or they become some special class separated from not just true humanity – the elect – but God's creation as well.

⁸⁸ *YE1* p.435.

⁸⁹ *YE13* p.478.

Edwards was too sharp a thinker to miss this line, and so feels the need to speak of some universal component of the atonement.⁹⁰

4.3 The Process of Redemption: Conversion

The doctrine of atonement is an exploration of the new possibility for human living provided by the work of Christ. The most important question, however, at least for a preacher and a pastor such as Edwards was for much of his life, is how this new possibility may be realised in a particular human life. How, on the basis of all of the above, can a particular (elect) person come to enjoy the benefits that are available to (elect) human beings through the work of Jesus Christ? Edwards' most complete answer came in a key sermon text. 'Justification by Faith Alone'⁹¹ is in its published form an expansion of one of a series of anti-Arminian sermons that were instrumental in sparking off the first revival that Edwards witnessed at Northampton.

The text for this sermon is Rom. 4:5 'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness', and the doctrine asserts 'we are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own.' Christ, Edwards states, has 'purchased' (again!) justification – that is, both a remission of guilt and an imputation of righteousness. Given this, 'there may be certain qualifications found in some persons which ... is the thing that in the sight of God renders it a meet and condecient thing, that they should have an interest in this purchased benefit.' There is no sense of desert here – no human person deserves to be justified by God, or can do anything which would merit this, that was the burden of *Original Sin*, and a fixed position in Edwards' thought.⁹² However, it is a datum confirmed by Scripture, tradition and pastoral experience for Edwards that some people receive God's gift and

⁹⁰ One of the notebooks containing source material for *Freedom of the Will* and *Original Sin* demonstrates the same point: 'Universal Redemption: in some sense Redemption is universal of all mankind all mankind now have an opportunity to [respond? the word is unclear] otherwise than they would have had if Christ had not died a door of mercy is in some sort now open for them.' (Beinecke collection Box 15 Folder 1205, p.10).

⁹¹ *BTI* pp.622-654.

⁹² The regular reason given by Edwards for this position is that to assert otherwise would detract from God's glory – a further example of the centrality of my theme to his thinking.

others do not, and so there must be some reason for this division. Clearly, the reason is faith, but Edwards' construction of how faith is a 'condition' is very careful. Justification is based on God choosing to treat Christ and each believer as a single moral agent – there is an effective moral union.⁹³ We are justified not *because* we are united with Christ but *by* being united with Christ: in union Christ's merits are ours, and so there is no need for a subsequent decision of the Father to justify those He has chosen to unite with His Son. Faith is the instrumental cause, on our part, of this union.

The danger here, and one that Edwards recognises, is that this can make faith merely another 'work' – a way for humanity to save themselves, rather than relying wholly on the grace of God.⁹⁴ Edwards responds to this in a number of ways. Firstly, the grounds on which God makes faith the decisive condition are not moral, but aesthetic – it is not that those with faith deserve to be saved (united with Christ), but that it is beautiful in God's eyes that they should be. Secondly, faith is the act of union, not a prior act to which union/justification are attached as a reward: '... faith is the very act of uniting or closing *on our part*. As when a man offers himself to a woman in marriage, he does not give himself to her as a *reward* of her receiving him...'.⁹⁵ Thirdly, Edwards' predestinarianism requires that faith itself is an unmerited gift of God – a requirement that merely moves the problem a stage backward.

'There is,' asserts Edwards, in the 'doctrine' of another published sermon,⁹⁶ 'such a thing as a divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means.' Mt.16:17 was the text, and the words 'flesh and blood

⁹³ The discussion of the patron-client relationship in *Miscellanies* 1352 and 1360 is no more than an attempt to uncover the logic of this divine choice.

⁹⁴ The question of why or how faith is made the condition for justification is probably the single most frequent subject of *Miscellanies* entries. Edwards' mature answers do not go very far beyond this sermon text, but it becomes ever-clearer that he sees union with Christ as the fundamental soteriological category, and faith as an appropriate, or beautiful, way for us to be united with the Saviour. See, for example, *Miscellanies* 1042 (unpublished): '...there is a particular beauty in his [God's] so ordering it that those sinners that heartily consent to & with their whole souls comply with Christ as a Mediatour should be looked upon & they only as in him or belonging to him.'

⁹⁵ 'Justification...' II.4.3 (*BT1* p.640) See also on this point the 'Appendix' to the 'Observations Concerning the Trinity' in *Treatise on Grace* pp.95-98.

⁹⁶ 'A Divine and Supernatural Light' *BT2* pp.12-17.

did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven' were the focus. All knowledge is from God, according to Edwards, but in imparting most knowledge He makes use of 'flesh and blood' as a 'mediate' or 'second' cause. This knowledge, by contrast, was imparted immediately, with no 'intermediate natural causes'. The knowledge is 'a true sense of the divine excellency of the things revealed in the word of God, and a conviction of the truth and reality of them thence arising'. Faith is a reflex act in response to this knowledge: one who sees the beauty of the gospel story cannot but be seized by it and so respond in faith.

So, the prior gift of God is this 'light'. Edwards' construction of this is characteristically careful. The light is emphatically not any new notional knowledge; it is an appreciation of the beauty and moral majesty of the notional knowledge of the gospel that is already present. Edwards' common illustration is of experiencing a taste – I might have been told of a liquid that tastes of seaweed and peat smoke, and might even believe that this could be a pleasant experience, in the sense of giving intellectual consent to such a proposition, but only when I taste the whiskies of Islay will I really understand what was meant, and be seized by the desire to discover more.⁹⁷ This is the 'sense of the heart' to which Edwards regularly refers.

This introduces an important topic that may be called the psychology of conversion, which I will return to and examine with the help of Edwards' revival treatises, but the main point in this sermon is the one I noted earlier, concerning the role of the Spirit as the benefit given to the elect in salvation. The 'light' is 'divine' and so the person of the Holy Spirit, acting 'in the mind of the saint as an indwelling vital principle.' The Spirit brings 'knowledge' in the sense that, renewed by the Spirit, a person is able to see the beauty of the gospel story that they already knew. The image is perhaps a light coming on in a dark room – I might have established that something was there by shadows and touch, but that it was a sculpture by Michelangelo had escaped me. But the coming of the Spirit does not just give me light to see the beauty, but the conceptual framework to

⁹⁷ Edwards' own illustration was of the sweetness of honey, but honey is perhaps a more prosaic foodstuff today than when Edwards spoke of it, and so his analogy communicates less well than it did.

appreciate it as well. More than this still, salvation is an ontic change in which a new basis ('indwelling vital principle') is given to the life of the person converted.

So, a person is converted because the Spirit illuminates their mind, or is given to them by the Father. We are back in the realm of the divine decrees, and so no further why? questions may be asked. In the beautiful melody that unfolds from God's first thought of the death of His Son, it is appropriate that *x* should hear and respond, that *y* should hear and be hardened, and that *z* should never hear. But the question recurs: how can the hardening of *y* and the loss of *z* be beautiful in this system? If the tonic note of the melody is really the cross of Christ, then in what sense is it appropriate or harmonious for a person to be lost? This, surely, is a discordant note, dissonant with not just the life of the church but the universe around. It is all the more dissonant because, as I have tried to show, the theme (to continue the musical metaphor) that is the life and loss of the reprobate has no relationship to this tonic note, no connection to the cross of Christ. Beauty, as I discussed in the previous chapter, is defined by relationship - so this cannot be beautiful. Worse than that however: beauty is also a category of ontology, so the question is not finally how the hardening of *y* and the loss of *z* can be beautiful, but how such things can be. God simply should not think like this.

4.4 The Psychology of Conversion

The criticism of Edwards that I have been seeking to develop in this chapter is almost complete; for the sake of comprehensiveness, I will finish with an account of Edwards' understanding of the subjective experience of being converted. Although many of his published writings treated this area, including the most popular ones,⁹⁸ I hope my reconstruction of Edwards' theology has demonstrated that this is more due to historical accident than to any particular focus of his thought in this area. The fact remains, however, that Edwards devoted himself to puzzling out these problems also, and some discussion of his answers is necessary here in order to offer a relatively complete account

⁹⁸ We might think not just of the revival treatises (culminating in the *Religious Affections*, but the earlier texts are collected in *YE4*) but also of Edwards' edition of Brainerd's *Diary* (*YE7*) and of a number of the sermons that he published during his lifetime.

of his theology. In this section I hope to show that here, too, the central vision of God's self-glorification is decisive for what Edwards has to say.

Edwards' *Personal Narrative*⁹⁹ famously records his doubts over his own conversion, centering on a worry that, as he had not gone through the steps of the process of conversion as mapped out by the Puritan tradition, there was some want or deficiency in his experience. There is a sense in which this question lies behind much of his writing in defence of revival, where the central question is 'how can a genuine work of the Spirit be identified?' and the answers given include an insistence 'not by a particular order of experience.'

This concern over identifying true and false religious experience seems foreign to Christians today, but two factors combined to make it extremely relevant to Edwards and his contemporaries. The first is theological: a Reformed and Puritan tradition of seeking to give assurance through a syllogism that included evidence of one's own conversion was bound to result in questions about what evidence was valid. The second reason – and perhaps the more powerful one – is sociological. Edwards had a sense of the prevalence of 'natural religion' – the attitude of unconverted people who were seeking selfish religious gratification, particularly, perhaps, some sort of freedom from the fear of hell. Now, the person who is in search of such selfish religious pleasure today will probably find it in whichever version of new religious practice is currently and locally fashionable. In Edwards' day such a person would have appeared diligent in Christian practice. Thus he faced the need to address a question that is unlikely to trouble pastors greatly in our own time.

The series of treatises in defence of the religious experiences of those who were affected by the revivals that Edwards produced began with a simple account of events in the first, localised, awakening of 1734-1735. *A Faithful Narrative* originated as a letter to a friend, but was gradually worked up into a more polished description of Edwards' first

⁹⁹ YE16 pp.790-804.

experience as a pastor of revival.¹⁰⁰ It is perhaps worth noting that local revivals were not novel; Stoddard had seen five such during his ministry,¹⁰¹ and Edwards himself had been moved (although not to conversion, in his own estimation) by two similar events which had occurred in his father's church.¹⁰² The Great Awakening, by contrast, was something new: a work of the Spirit so geographically widespread, and so temporally sustained was indeed remarkable – and, according to some, dangerous. Thus there was a need for analysis and defence of revivalistic preaching, and of the reality of revival experience.

The Distinguishing Marks represents Edwards' first attempt to provide such analysis and defence.¹⁰³ This text is a sermon on the need to 'try the spirits' in I John 4:1. In it Edwards introduced an idea that was to remain central throughout his involvement in the controversy: that of a 'negative sign'. There were positive signs, signs that would demonstrate by their presence that the Spirit was genuinely at work in this or that situation. But what Edwards regarded as negative signs were to become more controversially important, if of less lasting theological significance. These were epiphenomena; happenings which proved nothing either way regarding the presence or absence of a true work of the Spirit. Yes, some might cry out in fear as they listened to a sermon on hell, and later feel an overwhelming sense of relief at the mention of Jesus' name, but such proved nothing. A true work of the Spirit may well be accompanied by heightened emotion, and so cryings out could not be dismissed as hysteria that precluded the Spirit's presence. Such emotions could equally well be merely the natural responses of an unconverted sinner who falsely believes that she has hope, however.

As the controversy over the revivals went on, Edwards found himself fighting on two fronts. Not only did he need to oppose those who condemned the revivals out of hand, led by Chauncy, but he also had need to oppose those whose enthusiastical tendencies

¹⁰⁰ See C.C. Goen's 'Introduction' to *YE4* pp.32-46 for the (somewhat convoluted!) history; *YE4* pp.99-109 for the original letter, and pp.144-211 for a definitive text of the final published version.

¹⁰¹ Edwards claims continuity with this heritage in the *Faithful Narrative*. *YE4* p.190.

¹⁰² See the *Personal Narrative* in *YE16* p.790.

¹⁰³ For the occasion, see Goen in *YE4* pp.52-56, & pp. 226-288 for the text.

were giving revival a bad name and leading to the work being damaged, in Edwards' eyes (Davenport is the key name here).¹⁰⁴ One can imagine the woman of the paragraph above crying out, with Davenport saying 'she's saved', Chauncy saying 'she's mad' and Edwards saying 'this proves nothing' with some degree of exasperation!

If these things prove nothing, what does? Edwards' analysis is complex, particularly so in its mature form in the *Religious Affections*.¹⁰⁵ 'True religion,' according to the doctrine of that work, 'in great part, consists in holy affections.'¹⁰⁶ That is, in willing, and especially in loving. Edwards offers twelve positive signs by which holy affections may be identified, describing their source, their nature and their results.¹⁰⁷ Truly gracious affections come from the indwelling Spirit of God and the change of nature that accompanies that indwelling, consist of an appreciation of the beauty of God, and of 'divine things', and a disinterested love for God, and result in a humble, Christ-like, beautiful spirit that shows itself in Christian living.

The details of the individual signs have been much-studied, and a repetition of this material is not necessary here.¹⁰⁸ A link has been regularly made with a key concept in Edwards' psychology of conversion, the 'sense of the heart'. This term has been much-discussed,¹⁰⁹ as it is perhaps the most important idea that Edwards developed in response to Locke. In essence, it is knowledge that is emotionally affecting, or an act of will that coincides with held notions: the point at which the old faculty psychology is finally seen

¹⁰⁴ For a summary of the history, see again Goen in *YE4* pp.51-52. For a fuller account, Joseph Tracey's *The Great Awakening* Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1976, dates from the last century but is probably still as good a source of historical data as any. See pp.230-255 for Davenport.

¹⁰⁵ *YE2*.

¹⁰⁶ *YE2* p.95.

¹⁰⁷ *YE2* pp.191-461.

¹⁰⁸ John E. Smith's 'Introduction' to *YE2* is a good summary, and a useful pointer towards the wider literature.

¹⁰⁹ A selection: Erdt, Terrance *Jonathan Edwards: Art and the Sense of the Heart* University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1980 makes repeated reference to the topic (unsurprisingly, given the subtitle), as does Simonson, H. P. *Jonathan Edwards: Theologian of the Heart* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1974. Briefer discussions may be found in: Morimoto, Anri *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation*, Penn. State U.P. University Park, 1995 (pp.22-23); Cherry, Conrad *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* Doubleday, Garden City, 1966 (pp.19-20); and Jenson, *op.cit.* pp.70-71.

to be inadequate, because a person's whole self, both mind and will, is caught up in the experience of conversion.

However, the interest which has been focused on the psychological aspects of Edwards' account of Christian conversion has sometimes obscured the more directly theological aspects. The one point in his discussions of soteriology where Edwards admits to being innovative concerns the way in which salvation is applied: 'If we suppose no more than used to be supposed about the Holy Ghost, the honour of the Holy Ghost in the work of redemption is not equal in any sense to the Father and the Son's; nor is there an equal part of the glory of this work belonging to Him.'¹¹⁰ The old theology that had held that the Spirit merely applied the gifts of salvation that the Son had 'purchased' from the Father would not do; rather, the Spirit must Himself be seen as what is purchased. The Spirit 'acts in the mind of a saint as an indwelling vital principle ... [He] exerts and communicates himself there in his own proper nature ... The Holy Spirit operates in the minds of the godly, by uniting himself to them and living in them, exerting his own nature in the exercise of their faculties.'¹¹¹

At this point Edwards has succeeded in describing the conversion of the saints in terms of the Trinitarian relationships. An (unpublished) *Miscellanies* entry makes this point in remarkably vigorous language:

It was not fit that he [the mediator] should be either God the Father nor a fallen man because he was to be Mediatour between the Father & fallen man. Upon the same account tis not fit that he should be either the Father or the Spirit for he is to be Mediatour between the Father & the Spirit. In being Mediatour between the Father & the saints he is Mediatour between the Father & the Spirit. The saints as saints act only by the Spirit ... There is a need of a mediatour between God and the spirit as the Spirit is a principle of action in a fallen creature...'¹¹²

¹¹⁰ *Treatise on Grace* (ed. Helm) pp.68-69; see 'An Essay on the Trinity' in the same volume, pp.123-124, for the same point in another place.

¹¹¹ 'A Divine and Supernatural Light' I.1 (BT2 p.13).

This indwelling of the Spirit naturally leads to sanctification. Here, Edwards remains with the mainstream Reformed tradition, insisting that sanctification is to be expected, but regarding it as a long-term and partial reality. If Christian practice is the chief positive sign through which genuinely gracious affections can be identified, still '[t]rue saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding, may be foiled by particular temptations, and fall into sin, yea, great sins.'¹¹³ But, Edwards insists, a perseverance and growth in holy living will be the mark of all true saints, until the end of their lives.

A part of my argument in this thesis is that God's self-glorification is a key concept for Edwards, and that it should be understood in Trinitarian terms. In glorifying Himself in the work of redemption, there must be equal glory for Father, Son and Spirit, insists Edwards, and his account of conversion and its outworking is bent towards giving appropriate weight, and hence glory, to the work of the Spirit. God mediates salvation by His Son and Spirit, and so draws us into relationship with Himself. The language of the *Two Dissertations* is appropriate here – through His Son and Spirit the Father knows and loves us, and so salvation consists in our pneumatic response, in Christ, to the Father's *ekstasis* – our entry into ever deeper relationship until 'the creature must be looked upon as united to God in an infinite strictness.'¹¹⁴

4.5 Conclusion and Prospect

In the previous chapter I argued that, for Edwards, the being and history of creation were defined by the gospel story. I uncovered, using Frei's categories, a sustained attempt to read the world into the text, and this chapter, in part at least, has been about expounding the theological narrative into which the world is read. The narrative is a Trinitarian one: '...the persons of the Trinity, of their own will, have as it were formed themselves into a

¹¹² *Miscellanies* 614 (unpublished).

¹¹³ *YE2* p. 390.

¹¹⁴ *YE8* p. 534.

society, for carrying on the great design of glorifying the deity and communicating its fulness...'¹¹⁵ The language here invites words like 'daring' or 'unguarded'. As ever, it is important to remember that this is not material prepared for publication, and so perhaps not so carefully phrased as it might have been if reworked. The image, however, is a powerful one – the narrative into which the world is to be read is a story of dynamic inter-Trinitarian relationship. Hence the point I made in passing earlier:¹¹⁶ it is not that the atonement is rational in personal terms – rather, the atonement, being the centre of the personal inter-Trinitarian relationships that make up the narrative that defines the being and rationality of the world, is definitive of all personal rationality. Paul makes a very similar point in Ephesians, of course, in connection with marriage – the wife-husband relationship only makes sense because there is a rationality derived from Christ's love for the Church.¹¹⁷

The atonement is the central event of this narrative; the phrase I have repeatedly quoted concerning the crucifixion as the first and foundational decree of God makes this point, as does the supralapsarian form of Edwards' theology. Creation, history, and all other divine actions (which is to say all else that is) can be regarded as the necessary backdrop for God to glorify Himself through the death of His Son, and the outpouring of His Spirit. This was, simply, His first and best thought, to which all else is subsequent.

In spelling this out I have indicated my admiration for the basic vision of Edwards' Christology and my concerns about the confusion introduced by Lockean categories here, and also indicated the ways in which Edwards sought to be more rigorously pneumatological, and hence trinitarian, than the tradition he had inherited. This much is to be celebrated in Edwards' account, but I have also highlighted one key problem: I have already quoted Jenson's assertion that 'Edwards' doctrine of election anticipates at most points the justly praised "christological" doctrine of election developed by Karl

¹¹⁵ *Miscellanies* 1062, published as 'Observations Concerning the Scripture Oeconomy of the Trinity ...' in Helm (ed.) *Treatise on Grace* pp.77-94; p.78.

¹¹⁶ n.61 *supra*.CHECK THIS

¹¹⁷ Eph.5:21-33.

Barth,¹¹⁸ and noted that what is left open here is the question of reprobation. In the previous chapter I argued that, for Edwards, created being was mediated Christologically and pneumatologically; in this one the argument has been that the same is true of election and the salvation that is dependent upon it. If this is the case then it is not just that the determination of the reprobate is other than that of the elect, but that their being is – they are, and there is no other way of saying it, less human (or at least ‘differently human’) than the elect. The ‘seed of election’, of which Calvin was so concerned to avoid any suggestion, has here returned, and not as a seed, but as the largest of the trees of the field.¹¹⁹

It is instructive to consider how this problem arises, because it is a direct result of the advances I described in the last chapter. In developing a Trinitarian theology of creation, Edwards exposed the flaws in a Reformed tradition that had always seen the reprobate as Christless and Spiritless. It is noticeable in Calvin’s account of predestination that, whereas the name of Christ is linked in a number of ways with the elect,¹²⁰ the rejected live out their determination with no reference to Christ.¹²¹ As Reformed orthodoxy developed, this feature became fixed: Beza’s *Tabula praedestinationis*, and Perkin’s *Golden Chaine* (which is based closely upon it) firmly in their diagrammatic form place Christ with the elect on one side and leave the reprobate totally unconnected to Christ on the other.¹²² The most striking illustration of this tendency is perhaps from a modern

¹¹⁸ *America’s Theologian* p.106.

¹¹⁹ *Inst.* III.24.10.

¹²⁰ Reid’s article helpfully considers these. Reid, J.K.S. ‘The Office of Christ in Predestination’ *Scottish Journal of Theology* 1 (1948) pp.5-19 and 166-183.

¹²¹ This can be seen very strikingly in *Inst.* III.24, where sections 1-11 describe the fulfilment of the determination of the elect, and refer regularly and in many ways to Christ, and sections 12-17 describe God’s dealings with the reprobate. In these latter pages there are a number of references to Scripture introduced with words like ‘Christ Himself said,’ and one temporal reference (‘before Christ’s advent’), but Christ is mentioned only once in any theological sense, when the reprobate are described as ‘strangers to Christ’s body’. Given that Calvin introduces election as a means of offering assurance to believers, the problem in his doctrine may be simply that he is not interested in reprobation. This defence certainly could not be made for much of the following tradition.

¹²² Beza, Theodore ‘Summa Totius Christianismi...’ in *Tractationum Theologicarum* (Secunda Aeditio) Eustathii Vignon, Anchora, 1576 pp.170-205. The table is on p.170 (Notice particularly the first two sets of parallel boxes: firstly, ‘ELIGERE in CHRISTO feruandos’ is opposite ‘REICERE & propter suam ipsorum voluntariam culpam æternis pœnis addicere’; then ‘AMOR gratuitus Dei erga corruptos quidem in seipsis, sed in CHRITO (sic) gratis destinatos, electioni & saluti’ is opposite ‘ODIUM Dei iustum erga corruptis in

commentator: Richard A. Muller's *Christ and the Decree*, conceived as a defence against the charge that Reformed orthodoxy separated Christ and the doctrine of predestination, regularly demonstrates how Christ was connected with *election*. The shadow side of the decree proceeds with no influence from the Son and no work of the Spirit.¹²³

If one can be human without reference to Christ – if, that is, for example, human being is defined in relationship to Adam, not to Jesus – then this tradition may stand. The Creator, it is true, is properly named as Father, Son and Spirit, but an infralapsarian, at least, may speak about the *Logos asarkos* and suggest that the Incarnation was an afterthought. But I have suggested in the previous chapter that Edwards shows up the weaknesses in this tradition. God is known only in the gospel story, and so creaturely being, and hence human being, can only be known in the gospel. If this is the case, then to speak of a Christless, Spiritless existence for the reprobate is to deny them any humanity.

Edwards account of salvation, I have argued, is rich and suggestive; it is his account of perdition that creates a serious problem. In the next chapter, by focusing on Edwards' understanding of hell, I will investigate his account of reprobation and show how this problem manifests itself there, before moving in the final chapter to attempt a synthesis of Edwards' account of God's self-glorification and to suggest some ways by which this central problem may perhaps be lessened or avoided.

seipsis, ex peccati per ADAMUM propagatione'. The point could hardly be clearer). Perkins, William 'A Golden Chaine...' in *Works* vol.1 Cambridge 1612, pp.9-114.

¹²³ Muller, R.A. *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* Baker, Grand Rapids, 1988². See, for example, p.95 for the point concerning Beza, p.171 for Perkins (where Adam fulfils a role for the reprobate equivalent to Christ's for the elect!), and pp.171-173 for a series of assertions that this move characterises the whole period.

Chapter 5

God's Self-Glorification in the Damnation of Sinners

*Through me you enter the woeful city.
Through me you enter eternal grief,
Through me you enter among the lost.
Justice moved my high maker:
The Divine Power made me,
The Supreme Wisdom, and the Primal Love.
Before me nothing was created
If not eternal, and eternal I endure.
Abandon every hope, you who enter.
Dante, ll.1-9 of Canto III of the Inferno (tr. Singleton)*

That God is glorified in His gracious salvific action, as the previous chapter was devoted to arguing, is hardly a controversial point. The same, however, emphatically may not be said of the converse, at least in the present theological climate: the idea that God may glorify Himself in the rejection and punishment of impenitent men and women, that, if it must happen, this can be anything other than a cause of the most grievous divine sorrow, is rejected as a particularly gruesome and old-fashioned Calvinistic excess that we are most grateful to be rid of.¹

Perhaps - certainly the point may be found in Calvin.² But Jonathan Edwards, although other things as well, was nothing if not an old-fashioned Calvinist. The recent revival of interest in Edwards has sought to play down the note of 'hellfire' in his preaching (particularly), arguing that American literature anthologists perpetrated a major crime against his memory in ensuring that he was known only through 'Sinners in the hands of an Angry God'.³ This is, of course, true: there is far more to Edwards' thought than is hinted at in this sermon, even if it does offer a particularly

¹ This emphasis can be found even in a broadly sympathetic treatment such as John Colwell's 1992 Drew Lecture (published as Colwell, John E. 'The Glory of God's Justice and the Glory of God's Grace: Contemporary Reflections on the Doctrine of Hell in the Teaching of Jonathan Edwards' *Evangelical Quarterly* 67/4 (1995) pp.291-308).

² *Inst.* III.24.14.

³ See for example: Cherry, Conrad, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* Doubleday, Garden City, 1966 p.58; Jenson, Robert W. *America's Theologian: A Recommendation of Jonathan Edwards* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, p.101. Many other examples are readily available.

potent example of his rhetoric. But if not a crime, it would certainly be a distortion of his memory if this note were eradicated from it. At best, we would lose an important reminder that Edwards was, whatever else he was, a preacher in the Puritan tradition; at worst we might lose an important, if unpleasant, clue to interpreting his theology. One assumes that medical professionals do not enjoy all the examinations they are asked to perform; that there would be less medical knowledge available to us if they shrank from such tasks, however, is obvious. In this chapter I shall attempt a general survey of Edwards' doctrine of hell before showing how this relates to the wider theme of this thesis.

Comparing the reaction to Edwards' writing on hell with that to Dante's *Inferno*, quoted above, makes an important initial point: there is significantly less comfort with ideas in Edwards than with very similar ideas in Dante. This, presumably, can only be because of an implicit assumption that Edwards, being more 'modern', is culpable for invoking such ideas in a way that Dante is not. A medieval author is permitted to be 'obsessed' with the pains of hell;⁴ a philosopher conversant with Locke, living on the cusp of the great Enlightenment social experiment that was the founding of the American state, is not. The fashion in early American studies for comparisons of Edwards with Benjamin Franklin⁵ is an indication of this: if Franklin can be such a thoroughly modern 'Yankee', why is Edwards, in the same age, stuck with trying to re-write the old 'Puritan' script?

As the modernist consensus collapses, and Enlightenment values are more and more rejected, we may assume that at least the assumption of culpability on Edwards' part in many of these studies will quietly pass away. Indeed, one of the (many) merits of Robert Jenson's appreciation of Edwards is the recognition that his particular recasting of the first colonial American social experiment, the Puritan 'city on a hill', has much to say to a culture that preferred to listen to Franklin's new vision and is

⁴ The charge of 'obsession' is as unfair to Dante as it is to Edwards, of course, but the relative current popularity of the *Inferno* compared to the other two parts of the *Comedy* makes the comparison an apt one - particularly as the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* are regarded as 'difficult' because their content is more philosophical than that of the more popular work. Comparisons with Edwards hardly need spelling out!

⁵ See my discussion of this point in chapter 1.

still living with the consequences of that.⁶ The point that prompted these reflections, however, is still to be answered: how can Edwards, living in an age which is at least beginning to be Enlightened, speak as he does about the doctrine of hell?

Before levelling accusations that Edwards was obsessed with hellfire or similar, it seems only reasonable to investigate the extent to which he differed from the community and tradition of which he was a part. His pictures, although shocking, would not be out of place in the high Puritanism of the mid-seventeenth century American colonies, but they would be in the young, forward-looking, and Enlightened nation of 1800. We may usefully ask where the break came: if we press the motif noted above, whilst removing notions of blame, the question becomes is Edwards anachronistic, or Franklin prophetic? Or do they perhaps between them show the tensions of a nation 'between the times', providing an all-American mythology for our own 'postmodern' culture? I will begin this chapter by, albeit very briefly, seeking to identify Edwards' context on this point.

5.1 Visions of Hell in the Early Eighteenth Century

Edwards' heritage, at least, was Puritan. More than that: until such figures as Franklin found an alternative mythology⁷ in Enlightenment philosophy, the only heritage available to colonial America was Puritan. It is there, then, that I will begin my sketch. My intention is to trace both the substance and the presentation of belief in hell in the Puritan period, and how this developed in the decades afterwards, in order to provide a background to Edwards' own theology and rhetoric.⁸

Carl Trueman has written a useful, if brief, article on heaven and hell in Puritan thinking in the *Epworth Review*.⁹ He begins by commenting on the brevity of the

⁶ Jenson, *op.cit.* Jenson's initial statement of his purpose makes the point: 'Edwards knew what to make of the great eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and America and its church are the nation and the church the Enlightenment made.' p.3.

⁷ Using 'mythology' in the sense of 'foundational story', not with any assumptions about truth value attached. My own convictions about the Enlightenment paradigm will no doubt be clear to the reader, but this point, at least, stands whether or not they are accepted.

⁸ The concern with presentation ('rhetoric') alongside substance in the earlier parts of this chapter is based on the assumption that, with such an emotive subject as eternal human suffering, the language chosen to present a given idea can be just as important - and damaging - as the idea itself.

⁹ Trueman, Carl R. 'Heaven and Hell: 12 In Puritan Theology' *Epworth Review* 22/3 (Sept.1995) pp.75-85.

presentation of heaven and hell in the *Westminster Confession*,¹⁰ itself significant: there was presumably sufficient doctrinal agreement in the mid-seventeenth century for there to be no need to define truth and combat error in the documents of the Assembly. In analysing this doctrinal consensus, Trueman first explores the significant borrowings Puritan writers made from the medieval heritage, and identifies two points: the adoption of Aristotelian categories and logic,¹¹ and wholesale borrowings from scholastic theology - this latter including, for example, the *poena sensus - poena damni* distinction.¹²

There is, according to Trueman, an asymmetry in the doctrine of the last things in Puritanism. Heaven is coloured by a Christological focus; hell is, in essence, absence from God. Because of this, to speak of heaven is to be about theology proper in a way that to speak of hell is not. The language of physical suffering was recognised as inadequate of hell by the Puritans, but still used with some freedom.¹³ Puritan writers assert both that heaven is visible from hell, and the pains of the damned are thereby increased, and that hell is visible from heaven, with a corresponding increase of the joys of the saved.¹⁴ Finally, with Edwards quoted as an example, Trueman speaks of 'a basic Puritan pastoral preoccupation with indifference towards hell ...'¹⁵

In order to amplify this basic picture slightly, particularly to demonstrate some features of the rhetoric to which Edwards was heir, I want to examine two Puritan writings on hell briefly. I have deliberately chosen authors who have reputation of being among the more gentle breed of Puritan, in order to make more forcefully the

¹⁰ The only references are in 32:1, which teaches '...the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved for [the last judgement]'; 32:3, which states that, at the final judgement, 'The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonour...' and 33:2, which asserts that part of the reason for the judgement is the display of '[the glory of] his justice in the damnation of the reprobate who are wicked and disobedient,' and goes on to insist that 'the wicked ... shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.' Notable here is the total lack of controversy in comparison with much of the *Confession*: no opposing positions are named and rejected.

¹¹ 'It is tempting to describe *The Saint's Everlasting Rest* as the greatest application of Aristotelian physics to the service of Christian piety in the history of the church.' *ibid.* p.76 As Trueman notes, this is unsurprising, in that Reformed thinking was resistant to Cartesianism and, prior to Edwards' appropriation of Newton and Locke, few other philosophical schemes were available for service.

¹² *ibid.* p.77.

¹³ *ibid.* p.80; some examples of my own will be found below.

¹⁴ *ibid.* pp.79-80.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p.81.

point that such rhetoric was commonplace. The writings are Richard Baxter's *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*¹⁶ and John Bunyan's *The Resurrection of the Dead*.¹⁷

Baxter's *Saint's Rest* should need no recommendation; occupying a similar pre-eminence amongst Puritan devotional literature as its author's *Reformed Pastor* and *Christian Directory* do in the field of pastoral theology, it is one of the gems of the religious writing of the period. It is perhaps a matter of some surprise, then, to find within this work, a series of chapters describing in some detail the sufferings of those who are found at the last not to be saints. More so, perhaps, when it is realised that these chapters occupy a position of significance: the first of the 'uses' found for the doctrine of rest is 'Showing the unconceivable (*sic*) misery of the ungodly in their loss of this Rest.'¹⁸ Baxter here follows a common Puritan practice of including an 'alarm to the unconverted'¹⁹ in his text; my intention is to focus attention on the contents of that 'alarm'.

Baxter is, very simply, seeking to scare his readers into heaven: 'I am a messenger of the saddest tidings to thee, that ever yet thy ears did hear ... This sentence I am commanded to pass on thee, from the word: take it as thou wilt, and escape it if thou canst.'²⁰ To this end, he offers three sections, demonstrating the greatness of the loss of heaven, those things that aggravate this loss, and the positive torments that are added to that loss.²¹ The damned lose God, their own possibility of a glorified existence, all the benefits of God, and the company of the saints and angels.²² This loss is aggravated by the increased ability to understand their condition which they will then know; by the strengthening of their consciences; by the increased ability to feel; and by the clarity of their memories - particularly of the opportunities to escape

¹⁶ Baxter's *Works* are published in 23 vols., with a *Life* and appreciation by William Orme; the *Saint's Rest* may be found in vol.22: Baxter, Richard *Works*: vol.22 James Duncan, London, 1830.

¹⁷ A recent scholarly edition of Bunyan's *Miscellaneous Works* has been used: Bunyan, John *Christian Behaviour; The Holy City; The Resurrection of the Dead: Miscellaneous Works* vol.3 (ed. J.Sears McGee) Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1987.

¹⁸ *op.cit.* p.361; this use is discussed in the Third Part, ch.1-4.

¹⁹ The phrase is the title of a book by John Alleine; the concept will be recognised by anyone familiar with Puritan literature.

²⁰ *ibid.* pp.361-362.

²¹ In passing, it is notable here that the *poena sensus* - *poena damni* distinction underlies Baxter's thought, without explicit invocation.

²² *ibid.* pp.365-371.

the torment they spurned.²³ Then follows a list of the pleasant things of this world, which will be lost, just as surely as the delights of heaven,²⁴ before finally Baxter turns to the positive torments that the damned experience. The greatness of these are demonstrated by the fact that God is the Author of them, by the seriousness with which He takes the work of glorifying His justice, by the 'delight' He will take in punishing the wicked, by the identity of their tormentors, viz. Satan and themselves, by the way these torments will affect every part of soul and body continuously, by the lack of any hope of an end, and by their eternity.²⁵

This summary will have given some flavour of these sections, but to truly convey a taste of the rhetoric I must quote at some length:

Is it not a terrible thing to a wretched soul, when it shall lie roaring perpetually in the flames of hell, and the God of mercy himself shall laugh at them; when they shall cry out for mercy, yea, for one drop of water, and God shall mock them instead of relieving them; when none in heaven or earth can help them but God, and he shall rejoice over them in their calamity?²⁶

How God will stand over them with the rod in his hand, (not the rod of fatherly chastisement, but that iron rod wherewith he bruises the rebellious,) and lay it on for all their neglects of Christ and his grace. Oh, that men would foresee this, and not put themselves under the hammer of revenging fury ...²⁷

So also, when the time comes that he will purposefully manifest his justice, it shall appear to be indeed the justice of God. The everlasting flames of hell will not be thought too hot for the rebellious; and when they have there burnt through millions of ages, he will not repent him of the evil which is befallen them. Oh! wo (*sic*) to the soul that is thus set up for a butt, for the wrath of the Almighty to shoot at; and for a bush, that must burn in the flames of his jealousy and never be consumed.²⁸

These sections occupy a significant proportion of the text,²⁹ and these examples could be multiplied, but the point should now be made: Trueman could as well have picked Baxter as Edwards as an example of his 'basic pastoral preoccupation' with a neglect

²³ *ibid.* pp.371-395.

²⁴ *ibid.* pp.395-415.

²⁵ *ibid.* pp.415-425.

²⁶ *ibid.* p.419.

²⁷ *ibid.* p.418.

²⁸ *ibid.* pp.417-418.

of the seriousness of the threat of damnation. More briefly, let me add a third name to this list, which should serve to establish that such imagery was common currency amongst Puritan divines.

John Bunyan is perhaps the greatest of the Puritan authors, judged on purely literary terms; *Pilgrim's Progress* is in the very first rank of English literature both in terms of popularity and influence and, whilst none of his other work approaches this, such texts as *Grace Abounding* are still read, and deservedly so. For my purposes here, I will turn to a very brief treatise, making no comment on its theological merit or otherwise, in order to demonstrate that Bunyan, too, shared in the common Puritan rhetoric of damnation. In this work³⁰ Bunyan discusses at great length in narrative form the final judgement, with various 'books' being opened, and heaven and hell visible to all humanity before the bar. With considerable literary skill, he paints the desperation of those under judgement to be let into paradise and even across the centuries the writing is capable of conjuring feelings of urgency and suspense. My concern, however, is with the description of hell that Bunyan builds. Once again, the simplest way to communicate the flavour is to resort to quotation:

...they will most famously behold the pit, the bottomless pit, the fire, the Brimstone, and the flaming beds that Justice hath prepared for them of old ... Fire is that which of all things is the most insufferable, and insupportable. Wherefore, by fire, is shewed the grievous state of the ungodly, after Judgement. Who can eat fire, drink fire, and ly down in the midst of flames of fire? yet this must the wicked do. Again, not onely fire, but everlasting fire ...³¹

The Holy shall be in everlasting Light: But the Sinner in everlasting Darkness. Without light, I say, yet in Fire ever burning, yet not consumed, always afraid of death and hell, vehemently desiring to be annihilated to nothing. Continually fearing to stay long in Hell, and yet certainly sure they shall never come out of it. Ever desiring the Saints happiness (*sic*), and yet always envying their felicity. They would have it, because it is easie and Comfortable; yet cannot abide to think of it, because they have lost it for ever. Ever loaden with the delight of sin: and yet that is the greatest torture, always

²⁹ 72 pages out of 514 in the edition used.

³⁰ *op.cit.* pp. 197-292.

³¹ *ibid.* pp.286-287.

desiring to put it out of their Mind, and yet assuredly know (*sic*) they must for ever abide the guilt and torment thereof.³²

These passages are not pleasant; their authors never intended them to be pleasant and, in an age less used to such descriptions, they border on the horrific.³³ They have been included for a reason, however: there is a widespread assumption that Edwards is in some sense culpable for the doctrine of hell he espouses, and preaches. In assessing the validity of that charge, the tradition of rhetoric that he inherited must be taken with full seriousness.

Two monographs offer helpful discussions of the movements that occurred between the writing of such passages and Edwards' prime: Walker's *The Decline of Hell* and Almond's *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England*.³⁴ Both survey the period around 1700, as mainstream Puritan and other, stranger, conceptions from the Commonwealth radicals gave way to an increasingly universalistic picture. Following these authors, and Camporesi in *The Fear of Hell*,³⁵ I will identify several common features of the background to Edward's own thought on this subject:

Firstly, Walker and Almond both make a link between the doctrine of hell and changing notions of punishment: 'For Baxter, as for his contemporaries, the purpose of punishment of those convicted of crime was retributive, and the conscious infliction of physical suffering in a public context was central.'³⁶ This point is worthy of some attention: whilst retributive punishment, as described in the quotation, was regarded as ethically acceptable, there was little to oppose the inherited notion of hell. The concept of 'desert' was widely held, and this legitimated eternal punishment

³² *ibid.* p.290.

³³ Although one might cogently argue that for modern society to object to such descriptive language in print or pulpit whilst supporting the right of film directors to produce some of the sicker fantasies that have emanated from Hollywood in recent years is hypocrisy on a quite breathtaking scale.

³⁴ Walker, D.P. *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth Century Discussions of Eternal Torment*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1964; Almond, Philip C. *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* C.U.P., Cambridge, 1994.

³⁵ Camporesi, Piero *The Fear of Hell: Images of Damnation and Salvation in Early Modern Europe* (tr. Lucinda Byatt) E.T. Polity Press, Cambridge, 1990.

³⁶ Almond, *ibid.* p.84.

(once some argument concerning the infinite guilt of sin was constructed, and such arguments were commonplace³⁷). Equally, whilst the visibility of punishment was considered important, the 'vision across the chasm,' so repugnant to twentieth century sensibilities, was almost demanded for God's action to be just - and with this concept in place, the fact of the eternal bliss of the saints could demand the eternity of the torments of hell - God's justice would not be perfect, and hence their enjoyment of God not perfect, if they could not *see* justice being done on the impenitent.

As ideas of punishment became more focused on restoration and deterrence, so ideas of hell inherited from the Middle Ages became less in tune with the temper of the times. Thus, the idea of vision across the chasm from both sides gradually disappeared after 1700. Significantly, however, this was not the result of sustained criticism - the concept vanished quietly because, apparently, it was simply no longer part of the way people thought. There was now no need for punishment to be seen for it to be effective (obviously deterrence must be seen, but it must be seen in this life: the saints need no convincing to remain holy³⁸). Almond offers a further *datum*: the hordes of demons, and their ruler Satan, which formed part of the standard description of hell prior to 1700, rapidly disappeared in the new century. Either God was seen as directly punishing those in hell, or universalism was embraced.

The connection between understandings of hell and legal theories of justice is a natural one in a Western tradition which has usually understood the Atonement in forensic terms.³⁹ If this is followed, then once retributive theories of justice have been discounted, there can be little support for the doctrine of hell, in its traditional form of eternal conscious torment with no hope of an end. Such an understanding does not 'restore' the 'harm' done to God by sin; traditional doctrines of impassibility make any such language meaningless, and so restorative theories of justice offer little

³⁷ See below for a discussion of the standard argument as Edwards constructs it.

³⁸ Walker actually notes one writer who uses the need for the saints to be eternally deterred from sinning as an argument for the eternity and visibility of hell, but this was hardly a common position. *op.cit.* p.101.

³⁹ On the connection between atonement theories and the ethics of judgement see Gorringe, Timothy G. *God's Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996 and Moberly, Walter *The Ethics of Punishment* Faber and Faber, London, 1968.

help.⁴⁰ If such ideas of justice are to be used, then some scheme such as that of Anselm, which proposes a need for a debt to be paid in order for propriety to be satisfied must be invoked, and it is difficult to see how this differs, except in the language used, from straightforward retribution.⁴¹ As already noted in passing, for hell to have any deterrent effect it must be visible in this life, not the next, and so any such effect ceases to be relevant at the *eschaton*. Whilst it may be argued that the pains of hell must continue into eternity for the deterrent threat to be honest, such sophistry hardly seems reason enough for God to do such a terrible thing, if His character is anything close to what has been commonly assumed in the Christian tradition. Reformatory theories of justice, of course, lead one to the final universalisms of Origen and Hick,⁴² not to any support for the traditional doctrine of hell. In my examination of Edwards' doctrine, I will return to this question of the relationship between doctrines of hell and understandings of justice.

Secondly, the 'static' nature of hell is highlighted, by these authors: there is a complete 'moral freezing' at death, such that there can be no further guilt incurred, but also no hope of repentance. This view can be found in Aquinas.⁴³ Walker⁴⁴ links this to the deterrent value of the idea of hell,⁴⁵ a theme which he regards as important.⁴⁶ Such a moral freezing removes an obvious defence of the existence of hell - that the impenitent continue to sin, and so remain in punishment.⁴⁷

Thirdly, Walker traces the systematic connection between the doctrine of hell and other doctrines, particularly the atonement.⁴⁸ If Christ, as truly God, suffered and

⁴⁰ The widespread desire amongst recent theologians to re-cast (or remove) the doctrine of impassibility hardly alters this point: whilst some wish to speak of God suffering as a result of our sin, and it is easy to see how this could be used as an argument in favour of traditional doctrines of hell, there would seem to be little desire to make this a reason (excuse?) to re-introduce such doctrines.

⁴¹ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?* Book 1 ch.12-23.

⁴² Hick's understanding is not necessarily universalist, in that he preserves a place for indeterminate human freedom - see my discussion towards the end of this chapter.

⁴³ *S.T. 2a2ae* q.13 art.4.

⁴⁴ *op.cit.* p.23.

⁴⁵ That hell has a deterrent value is undisputed throughout the period; the object of the discussion of justice above was to indicate that if hell has no more than a deterrent value, it becomes difficult to defend its existence.

⁴⁶ Various authors are quoted to the effect that, if the doctrine of hell is questioned, crime will necessarily increase - see pp.1-4, and *passim*.

⁴⁷ According to Walker, Leibniz, amongst others, actually offered this defence. *ibid.* pp.24-25.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* pp.26-29.

died for our redemption, then, within a retributive scheme, sin must be infinitely culpable: the moral calculus here is a reversal of Anselm's in *Cur deus homo?*: he argued that, since sin must be infinite, only God could atone;⁴⁹ now the argument is that since God has atoned, sin must be infinite.⁵⁰ Walker makes the point that this made it very easy for Socinians and Arians to reject the orthodox doctrine of hell, although others may wish to place more stress on a common cause for the rejection of various orthodox doctrines than on a theological consequent like this. Walker offers a fourth section, concerned with what I have called the 'vision across the chasm.' In discussing this under the question of retributive justice, I hope I have indicated theological linkages which may not be wholly evident in Walker's account.

In summary, then, the Puritan tradition which Edwards inherited stood in broad continuity with the medieval tradition both in doctrine and rhetoric concerning hell. I have highlighted the connection with theories of justice that led to common views of hell changing during the early decades of Edwards' life, and the 'vision across the chasm', the decline of which demonstrates this shift well. In addition, I have followed Walker in noting other aspects of the received doctrine which were being challenged in Edwards' day.

5.2 Edwards' Doctrine and Rhetoric of Hell

With this background in place, it is now appropriate to examine Edwards' own understanding, and presentation, of hell. When Edwards' sermons on the subject are read alongside the descriptions quoted earlier, what is striking is actually his reticence in graphic descriptions of hell.⁵¹ His preaching ministry was carried out less than a century after the origin of these illustrations, and so one is forced to conclude that, in his rhetoric, Edwards was no more than in step with his times. He certainly can - and

⁴⁹ *C.D.H.* book II ch.6.

⁵⁰ One thinks of Barth's argument that we only understand what sin means by seeing Jesus accepting its consequences on the cross.

⁵¹ The crude anthropomorphism of God's infliction of torments seen in Baxter, for instance, could not be paralleled within Edwards' corpus. The reader of Edwards' *Miscellanies* cannot fail to be struck by the sense that his abiding interest is in the joys of heaven, not the pains of hell, and he is far more graphic in describing the former, even with much less Scriptural material on which to build.

regularly does - use language to shock and grab the attention of his congregation, but usually it is not the pains of hell itself he stresses, but their immanence, their unavoidability, their eternity, and the sovereignty of God.⁵²

It is worthy of note, even if only in passing, that in choosing to preach in such ways Edwards was not out on a limb; his own criticisms of revivalist excesses suggests that many were so affected by their experiences of the revival that they preached in ways even Edwards found wholly unacceptable.⁵³ Further, Edwards' practice here differed little from that of Wesley or Whitefield.⁵⁴

Turning to doctrine, rather than presentation, if we search Edwards for visions of demons and Satan, we again find that he was in step with his times. His vision of hell is between God and the damned, perhaps all the more shocking for today's Christian reader because of that,⁵⁵ but there is little or no room for great armies of demons with twisted faces tormenting the damned, as there had been in the Puritans of the previous centuries. Certainly Edwards believed in the devil and the fallen angels; his

⁵² It has been regularly remarked, but serves as an ideal example here: the images of 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God' terrify by stressing instability - the mere pleasure of an angry Deity keeping the spider out of the flames - not by stressing the pains of hell. This makes the doctrine of God an even sharper question of course, and one I shall return to. For other examples of the point, see my analysis of the various published 'hellfire' sermons below.

⁵³ James Davenport is the name almost always mentioned in this connection, although it is unclear whether he was the most culpable, or just the most notorious, culprit. Reading the history, I am left with a uncomfortable feeling that he is blamed most because he detailed his own failures in a retraction. One could hope that Christian theologians rehearsing this history would have been more conscious of the impropriety of heaping guilt upon a person precisely because they have repented. For brief accounts of the history of this part of the controversy over the revivals, see *YE2* pp.2-8; *YE4* pp.51-52; 60-61; for Edwards' explicit statements that he feels some have been emphasising the terrors of hell too much, see *YE4* pp.246-248. For Davenport's retraction, see *Confessions and Retractions in The Great Awakening: Documents Illustrating the Crisis and its Consequences* ed. Heimart, Alan and Miller, Perry, Bobbs-Merill, Indianapolis, 1967 pp.257-262. The editors describe Davenport as 'a convenient target' - p.257.

⁵⁴ This point may be demonstrated by reference to James Downey's study *The Eighteenth Century Pulpit: A Study of the Sermons of Butler, Berkeley, Secker, Sterne, Whitefield and Wesley* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1969. Downey says of Whitefield's predilection for such preaching: 'It is little wonder that, projecting such graphic descriptions of hell, he sent many away from his services distraught with fear. But Whitefield made no apology for this. He believed that it was "better to have some soul-trouble here, than to be sent to hell by Jesus Christ hereafter".' (p.162). According to Wesley, Downey suggests, '[c]ongregations must never be allowed to forget the ineluctable fate of the impenitent' (p.192). Downey quotes at length from both preachers, and a glance at the relevant passages will offer considerable support for the point.

⁵⁵ If only in that such immediacy may imply some uncomfortable things about God.

(Reformed) orthodoxy was, here as elsewhere, impeccable;⁵⁶ it is simply that he was not especially interested in them, and saw little use for pictures painted involving them.⁵⁷

It is when we turn to what I have termed the 'vision across the chasm', to the saints rejoicing over the sight of sinners being punished and sinners suffering more from seeing saints in glory, that Edwards' doctrine appears, famously, out of step. An entire sermon, 'The End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous,'⁵⁸ is devoted to defending this point, and it regularly appears in other texts.⁵⁹ This sermon, on Rev.18:20, begins by asserting 'When the saints in glory shall see the wrath of God executed on ungodly men, it will be no occasion of grief to them, but of rejoicing.'⁶⁰ Scripture, according to Edwards, plainly teaches that heaven and hell are each visible from the other. Further, when the righteous see the sufferings of hell 'They will not be sorry for the damned, it will cause no uneasiness or dissatisfaction to them; but on the contrary, when they have this sight, it will excite them to joyful praises.'⁶¹

This is so out of tune with our own times that it is in danger of exciting simple revulsion. As I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, this should not be allowed to prevent us tracing Edwards' logic on this point. It is a part of his theology, and one I intend to show to be important in understanding his vision of glory, and the flaws therein. Edwards offers several arguments for his contention that the saints will praise God at the sight of the damned. Firstly, and negatively, it is not because of any ill disposition in the saints. They have no love and no pity for the damned, because they love only what God loves and God does not love the damned. Secondly and positively, God glorifies Himself - his justice, power and majesty - in the punishment of sinners, and the saints will rejoice in any display of His glory, so they will rejoice at the sight of the sufferings of hell. Thirdly, in seeing what they have been saved

⁵⁶ For references, see the *Miscellanies* entries listed in Edwards' table: *YE13* p.130 (under devils) and p.145 (under Satan).

⁵⁷ A brief passage such as the one in the sermon entitled 'The End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous' (*BT2* pp.207-212) referring to the lack of any pity in the devils that torment the damned, (see IV.1.3, p.211) only proves the point: it is simply not characteristic of Edwards' preaching.

⁵⁸ *BT2* pp.207-212.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, 'Wicked Men Useful in their Destruction Only' *BT2* p.127.

⁶⁰ *op.cit.* Sec.1.

⁶¹ *ibid.* Sec.1 Prop.II.

from, the saints have a greater sense of their own happiness and a greater sense of God's love and grace; both gratitude for salvation, and this further glorification of God as the depths of His love are seen, excite them to worship. Edwards is aware of the objection that any modern reader would raise, although not perhaps of the emotional force with which it would be raised, and he answers the point that this appears to be a less than perfect action on the part of the saints in several ways. An examination of these shows that they essentially reduce to his fourth argument: that the exercise of a virtuous disposition is different in different circumstances. So the saints are called to love sinners now because they do not know whether a particular person may be amongst the elect and hence later converted; then they will know, and so may respond with simple hatred for those whom God hates.⁶² Again, in the suffering of the reprobate the saints see God's glory, and they are more aware of His love for them, and so it is appropriate for them to rejoice at the sight, but this is not the case with human suffering seen in this life, which appropriately generates pity and compassion in a virtuous person. The difference, according to Edwards, is in the nature of the suffering, not in the virtue of the person who sees it.⁶³

So, my examination thus far suggests that Edwards was broadly in tune with his times, if perhaps a little on the old-fashioned side (understandable in someone from the frontier) in both his rhetoric of damnation and in most areas of his doctrine. The single glaring exception is the 'vision across the chasm' and the use he makes of that. As with his commitment to Calvinist expressions, Edwards can be seen here to be firmly holding to a doctrine that is rapidly being discarded all around, presumably because it forms an important plank in his theological scheme. My purpose in the next part of the chapter, then, will be to use this anomaly as a way in to explore the

⁶² This would seem to presuppose a limited atonement, at least with Edwards' Calvinist presuppositions; Edwards' views on this issue will be considered later in the chapter.

⁶³ The strongest argument that Edwards advances in favour of these ideas is actually found in the *Miscellanies*. In entry 1356, Edwards constructs a series of arguments against the idea that hell is reformatory, rather than punitive, in the course of which he asserts: 'There is nothing in the accounts of the day of judgement [in Scripture] that looks as tho the saints had any love or pity for the wicked, on ac of the terrible long-continued torments which they must suffer. Nor indeed will the accounts that are given admit of supposing any such thing. We have an account of their judging them & being with Christ in condemning them, concurring in the sentence ... but no account of their praying for them, nor of their exhorting them to consider and repent...' (p.12 of Schafer's transcript). These observations are significant, and must be taken seriously by any theology that is committed to the authority of Scripture.

doctrinal concerns that lie behind Edwards' understanding of damnation. This will take up the next two sections, the first being an examination of the writings (mainly sermons) that treat directly of hell, and the second an examination of an area of theology which will form an important part of the background to this question in Edwards' own thought.

5.3 *The Use of Hell in Promoting God's Glory*

The key texts for an examination of Edwards' doctrine of hell come from the published sermons: 'The End of the Wicked Contemplated by the Righteous',⁶⁴ 'The Wicked Useful in their Destruction Only',⁶⁵ 'Wrath upon the Wicked to the Uttermost',⁶⁶ 'The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners',⁶⁷ and, famously, 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God'.⁶⁸

This is an unpleasant selection of titles, but notice what it means: there is almost nothing in Edwards' major published works which touches on the doctrine of hell - a brief comment in the section of *True Virtue* concerning conscience;⁶⁹ a few pages towards the end of *History of Redemption*;⁷⁰ but, overall, very little. The comparison with Baxter's *Saints' Rest*, to which I have already referred, is instructive: nearly a sixth part of this work is devoted to discussing hell. This cannot be put down to subject matter: *Original Sin*, *True Virtue*, and any or all of the Revival Treatises could have included an 'alarm to the unconverted' without raising any surprise amongst those used to Puritan literature. A relatively small collection of sermons⁷¹ and a number of *Miscellanies* entries⁷² are the entirety of Edwards' output in this area and, whilst their contents should not be minimized, nor should they be over-emphasised simply because of their sensational nature.

⁶⁴ *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ *BT2* pp.125-129 (dated July 1744).

⁶⁶ *BT2* pp.122-125 (dated May 1735).

⁶⁷ *BT1* pp.668-679 (The fourth of the 'Five Discourses' which Edwards published as his anti-Arminian series which, he claims, were a catalyst for the first revival he saw at Northampton, in 1734)

⁶⁸ *BT2* pp.7-12 (Preached at Enfield on 8th July 1741, and at Northampton a few months earlier).

⁶⁹ *YE8* pp.597-599.

⁷⁰ *YE9* pp.505-506, 512.

⁷¹ In addition to those listed, only one of the sermons thus far published is devoted to hell: 'The Torments of Hell are Exceeding Great' in *YE14* pp.301-331.

I will treat these sermons in a theological, rather than chronological, order, beginning with 'Wrath upon the Wicked'. The doctrine of this sermon states: 'When those that continue in sin shall have filled up the measure of their sin, then wrath will come upon them to the uttermost.' - the points stressed being that there is a limit permitted to the sin of any wicked person, and that when that limit is filled, God's wrath will fall without any restraint. The use of this is to encourage those still unconverted to seek salvation. Wrath will come without restraint, without mercy, without limit and without end, because 'sin is an infinite evil.'⁷³ This sermon is a simple threat; there is little other than standard Puritan ideas contained therein, although the rhetoric focuses on the immediate action of God in punishing those in hell - an emphasis entirely in accord with Edwards' regular stress on God's immediacy. This focus is emphasised when the most famous of Edwards' imprecatory sermons is considered; as already noted,⁷⁴ the stress in 'Sinners...' is not so much on the pains of hell as on their immediacy and the instability of the unconverted sinner - again and again, the image is of the hand of God, the God the listeners are told they have provoked to anger and hatred, being the only thing that keeps them out of the fire. This is unsurprising when the doctrine of the sermon is considered: 'There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell, but the mere pleasure of God.' Immediacy and instability are the hall marks.

Wilson Kimnach, in his long and significant introduction to the various volumes of Edwards' sermons in the Yale Edition, has traced the genre of this sermon to 'hands' sermons, preached to criminals condemned to execution and often later published.⁷⁵ The rhetorical trick Edwards used is to take the language of these sermons, delivered to those on the point of certain death, and to apply it to his listeners in Enfield to stress the instability of their position. Edwards' vision of immediacy reached a terrifying crescendo here: everything is stripped away, God and the sinner are the

⁷² Edwards' *Table*, which is exhaustive, lists 70 of the 1400+ entries as having some reference to hell, or about 5% - almost exactly the same number as refer to heaven. See *YE13* pp.134-136. There is little in these entries that is not present in the sermons that I am considering.

⁷³ *BT2* p.123.

⁷⁴ n.52 *supra*.

⁷⁵ *YE10* pp.167-179.

only two beings in view, and God is characterised as being primarily powerful and angry.

These two sermons point to the first aspect of Edwards' understanding of hell that I want to draw out: the note of immediacy. Edwards' vision of the immediacy of God's relations with men and women has been mentioned before in this study, but this is the point where he might have been expected to finally draw back from it. After all, according to Trueman, the basic description of hell in the Puritan tradition was the *poena damni*, the absence of God. For Edwards, this is not the case: hell is the presence of God, but of God in His anger and wrath. What hell is not, however, and the texts will be searched in vain for any counter-evidence, is the presence of the Trinitarian God. God's close relationship with His creation, is Trinitarian - most obviously in the divine self-giving to the world, which is the sending of Son and Spirit. In redemption, it is the closeness of the saints' relationship to Christ, and the presence of the indwelling Spirit which demonstrate the closeness of God. Here, in hell, it appears that a different God is present. I will return to this theme.

Bracketing this Trinitarian question, Edwards' position (insisting that hell is the presence, rather than the absence, of God) has a certain strength theologically, in that he takes with full seriousness the contingent nature of human creatureliness. There is always a certain suspicion in accounts which stress the absence of God that what is at work is a borrowed Greek view of the necessary immortality of the soul, and so a concept of hell as the soul living out its life apart from God.⁷⁶ Edwards' conviction that continued existence of any sort must be solely by the active will of God is surely truer to the Biblical texts, but raises an acute problem: why, if this is the case, are the damned resurrected at all?

It may be that the truth of this position can be established by exegesis, at least for anyone with a 'high' view of Scripture⁷⁷ - and certainly this would be the case for

⁷⁶ Perhaps Odysseus' experiences in the Underworld come to mind, as he praises the shade of Achilles for the high regard in which he is held in the realm of the dead. Achilles' response is to insist that to be a slave but alive would be better than his current state. *Odyssey* Book 11.

⁷⁷ '...if a specific sense be attached to words, never-ending misery is enunciated in the Bible. On the presumption that one doctrine is taught, it is the eternity of hell torments.' The claim is of course

Edwards. This is not, however, the challenge: when Edwards adopts the realist understanding of virtue of which *True Virtue* is an exposition, and particularly when he does so in full knowledge of Locke's attempt to make justice and similar self-defining concepts, the pressing question must be how Edwards can consider such a position theologically possible. When Bruce Davidson wrote an article entitled 'Reasonable Damnation: How Jonathan Edwards argued for the rationality of hell' he was asking the right question.⁷⁸

I will address this question by examining the remainder of the sermons listed at the beginning of this section,⁷⁹ starting with 'The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners'. This sermon, preached on Romans 3:19 'That every mouth may be stopped,' is a defence of the doctrine of hell on precisely this point: how can it be just? Edwards answers on the basis of two data: human sinfulness and God's sovereignty. On the first, he adopts a traditional defence, in arguing for the infinite guilt of sin. This can only be appropriately dealt with by either suffering of infinite worth - as in the self-offering of Christ on the cross - or suffering of infinite duration - as in the eternal punishment of the wicked. Edwards' construction of the argument is typically careful, and must have been shattering to hear preached. Punishment, he asserts must be proportional to the crime punished, this is simple (retributive) justice. The heinousness of a crime is, in turn, proportional to the strength of the obligation offended against. Obligations to love, honour or obey are proportionate to the degree of loveliness, 'honourableness' or authority in the person in question - this is the definition of these words. But God is infinitely lovely, *etc.*, and so, tracing the chain back, any offence against God is deserving of infinite punishment. Therefore, 'the *eternity* of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite: and renders it no more than infinite' - so punishment is proportionate.

vastly over-stated, but makes the point. The quotation is in Shedd, W.G.T. *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment* Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1986 p.118.

⁷⁸ Although I find the answers he gives lacking in penetration. The article is: Davidson, Bruce W. 'Reasonable Damnation: How Jonathan Edwards argued for the rationality of hell' *Journal of the Evangelical Theology Society* 38/1 (March 1995) pp.47-56.

⁷⁹ An early attempt at a defence can be seen in 'All God's Methods are Most Reasonable' (*YE* 14 pp.165-197), particularly sections I, II and V. The arguments in the sermons that I analyse in the main text cover the points made here more carefully, so I will not include an analysis of this sermon.

There is a more careful construction of this in *Miscellanies* 713,⁸⁰ where Edwards (presumably independently) reaches the same conclusion as Aquinas⁸¹ in arguing that all sins are infinite in one direction but not in another. Edwards invokes the image of cylinders of infinite length, which may still differ greatly in diameter and yet all be infinite. In the same way, considered as offence against God, all sin is infinitely culpable, but considered in other ways sins may be much greater or less than each other.⁸² Aquinas follows this by insisting that punishment is infinite in its duration but finite (and varying) in its intensity – not a point Edwards makes as far as I am aware, but one from which he is only one step away.

Considering the question from the stand-point of God's majesty, Edwards is concerned to make three points: that God is under no obligation to prevent us from sinning; that it is just for God to impose the federal scheme; and that God may choose to redeem or not as He pleases, when fallen humanity is in view. The first of these is defended on the grounds that it would be unreasonable to insist that God makes us in such a way that it is impossible for us to sin, and so we cannot blame Him when we do. Further, God may permit sin justly, even if He knows it is certain we will fall into sin - or if He so orders the creation that it is inevitable that we should fall into sin.⁸³ The second of Edwards' contentions is that there is no reason why God should choose to treat us as individuals, rather than as a federal whole under Adam,⁸⁴ as the latter is no more inherently dangerous to us than the former. Once again, there is apparently a certain doublethink present here, as this can only be the case if Adam's sin is not foreknown and foreordained. Lastly, he argues that with fallen humanity in view, God may justly choose who to redeem and who not to, since all are guilty.

⁸⁰ As yet unpublished, but cited in this connection in *YE3* p.41 n.1.

⁸¹ *S.T. Supp.* q.99 art.1 *responsio*.

⁸² Edwards' precise words - 'it may be doubled & trebled yea & made a thousand fold more by the increase of other dimensions' (*Miscellanies* 713) - lack mathematical rigour, in that the volume of a cylinder of infinite length and *any* finite diameter is the same. One could seek increases by invoking Cantor's theory of transfinite numbers (unknown in Edwards' day, of course) - whereby the volume of a cylinder of infinite diameter would be a larger infinity than the first (an aleph-1 set as opposed to an aleph-null set), but Edwards' point is made by his illustration, whatever the mathematical niceties!

⁸³ In this final step, the defence of his predestinarian scheme, Edwards may appear vulnerable. I will return to this question in the next section.

⁸⁴ The federal scheme, unsurprisingly given its cultural *milieu*, does not mention Eve in this connection. It is not clear to me that the inclusion of Eve would alter the theological scheme in any significant way, however.

These points, taken together, are unsatisfactory. Each on its own may indeed work. It is, however, integral to Edwards' theological scheme that such decisions do not come on their own. It is not that God creates *homo labilis* and is then 'surprised' and forced to take a new decision when we fall; it is not even that God creates *homo labilis* in full knowledge that we will fall; as I have tried to show, Edwards' understanding of creation is such that history is all immediately present to the mind of God - with this understanding of the relationship between eternity and time, Edwards is asking us to believe that God creates not just *homo lapsus* but the *massa damnata*. The arguments he deploys will not defend against the charge of injustice levelled here.⁸⁵ Once again, this difficulty is related to Edwards' predestinarianism, and I will return to it in the next section.

The two remaining sermons address a slightly different question: the usefulness of hell. This will not stand as a defence on its own, of course: hell may not finally be accepted because it is useful, although unjust. It is, however, a second strand to Edwards' attempts to justify the existence of hell, and a further guide to his understanding of hell. I will begin with his sermon on Ezekiel 15:2-4, 'The Wicked Useful in their Destruction Only.'

Edwards, with a certain horrific logic, presses the image in the text of a barren tree being useful only for fuel to assert that those who do not 'bring forth fruit to God' are useful only when burning in hell. The 'end of their being' is to glorify God; if this cannot be obtained by living for Him, then in eternal death they can bring glory to God: God's majesty is glorified in that the greatness of it is seen by the awfulness of offending against it; God's justice is glorified in that He does not shrink from delivering the damned to what they deserve; and God's love and mercy are glorified in that the saints are given a sense - and a sight - of what they have been freed from by the mere grace of God.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ To be fair to Edwards at this point, we cannot expect the theological rigour of his later treatises within the confines of a sermon. My purpose here is not to dismiss the arguments of the sermon, but to indicate that they are inadequate to answer the general question, however valid in context.

⁸⁶ Underlying these conceptions is an important point: Edwards, in common with the majority of the Christian tradition, cannot conceive that human beings will ever be able to see God directly (this perhaps goes back to an ontological point I made in the third chapter of this thesis, in that it is not being embodied or being sinful that separates us most fundamentally from God, it is being created), and so we may only ever hope to see God in His works. Hence, in *Miscellanies* 811 (unpublished), Edwards

Edwards focuses on God's glorifying of Himself in the punishment of the reprobate, which is made an occasion for worship and thanksgiving when seen by the saints. So, in the final sermon that I will consider, 'The End of the Wicked...', which I have already discussed at some length, Edwards asserts that, whilst God glorifies Himself in everything He does, He does so principally in the eternal fate of His intelligent creatures - whether to life or death. In the eternal death of the wicked, He glorifies His own justice, His power and majesty, and His grace and love, in the ways described above. The use of hell is that God is glorified through it, by the display of His perfections. Assuming it is just for God to send people to hell, this point must be considered valid.⁸⁷ Once again, however, the same question recurs: in his basic account of God's self-glorification, in creation and in redemption, God's glory is defined by Trinitarian concepts and the gospel narrative. These are only conspicuous by their absence in the writings on hell.

Again, leaving a full consideration of this point until the end of the chapter, on Edwards' own terms the question remaining is one of justice, and the sharpness of it, as I have indicated, depends on his predestinarianism.⁸⁸ In order to explore this question more fully, then, I will need in the next section to devote space to the last of Edwards' major works to be considered in this thesis, and to explore Edwards' doctrine of reprobation.

5.4 Edwards' Calvinism in Original Sin

If the doctrine of hell Edwards adopts is to be treated with full seriousness, both doing justice to the uses he makes of it and highlighting possible weaknesses within it, it must be viewed in connection with his predestinarianism. Certainly, if an 'Arminian'

argues that the saints can see what is done on earth, and there they see God's perfections, and so are led to worship. Again, in *Miscellanies* 1137 (published only in the 1830 Dwight edition), '[t]he beatifical vision of God in heaven consists mostly in beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ either in his work or in his person as appearing in the glorified human nature'. For the wider point see: Placher, William *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong* Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, 1996.

⁸⁷ Although I will raise some objections to it in section 5.5 below.

understanding of freedom and salvation is once admitted, it is easier to defend eternal, conscious torment - indeed, the defences already explored could be considered sufficient from such a starting point. Edwards, however, does not start from here. I looked at the first part of his projected defence of his variety of Calvinism in *The Freedom of the Will* in the previous chapter; I will now introduce the theme in this chapter with a reading of the second, *Original Sin*.⁸⁹

Edwards finished this work in 1757, intending it, as he tells us, not just as a reply to Turnbill and Taylor, but as a '*general defense* of that great important doctrine.'⁹⁰ Turnbill and, particularly Taylor, seem never to have been far from his mind, however. In John Taylor of Norwich, Edwards seems to have found an opponent worthy of his foil; unlike the various works addressed in *Freedom of the Will*, Taylor's *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, Proposed to Free and Candid Examination* was written by a scholar of no mean ability, who was skilled in both Biblical languages and contemporary philosophy and theology.⁹¹ The book itself had apparently rapidly gained a reputation of being unanswerable, despite valiant attempts by, among others, Isaac Watts.⁹² The nature of what Edwards called 'Arminianism' in New England has already been noted, and a moment's thought will show how amenable such a mood would be to an apparently reasonable and learned attack on one of the most offensive of the 'old Calvinist' doctrines.⁹³

Edwards' reply is divided into four parts, with the first three designed to demonstrate the truth of the doctrine and the last designed to answer objections raised against it.

⁸⁸ *Miscellanies* 779, for instance, contains a long defence of the appropriateness of God's punishing of sin, which works on its own terms, but (again) ignores the way in which the arguments must be adjusted if it is held that God ordained the sin in the first place.

⁸⁹ YE3; key secondary texts relating to this work include Clyde A. Holbrook's *Editor's Introduction* (YE3 pp.1-101); Storms, C. Samuel *Tragedy in Eden: Original Sin in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* University Press of America, London, 1985; and pp.141-153 of Jenson's *America's Theologian*. In addition, Haroutunian's *Piety vs Moralism* will be found to reflect this controversy on almost every page, although it is only rarely in the foreground.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.102; italics original.

⁹¹ For a brief biography of Taylor, see YE3 pp.68-70. His *Scripture Doctrine* was published either 1738 or 1740 - see YE3 p.2 n.5.

⁹² See YE3 p.3, where both this reputation and the various responses are discussed.

⁹³ Jenson states 'The rising bourgeoisie found the notion of original sin the single greatest religious offence to its ideology and aspirations.' (*op.cit.* p.144) This may be overstated - certainly the doctrine of predestination would be a close challenger - but the basic point, that this linked nexus of predestinarian doctrines was inimical to the rising American mood, holds.

The first two parts, roughly equal in length, discuss evidence for original sin in 'facts and events' and Scripture, respectively; the third, much shorter, part offers a theological argument based on the doctrine of redemption. The work as a whole suffers in comparison with its companion volume, *The Freedom of the Will* - but then, most books would. One might describe *Original Sin* as competent rather than brilliant; its one original contribution, the doctrine of imputation put forward, has been considered as misconceived by most commentators.⁹⁴ Other than this point, the book is little more than a solid re-statement, mainly built on Biblical exegesis, of the mainstream Christian position. Edwards displays his usual clarity, and his usual cumbersomeness, in his restatement, and does a solid job of defending against the particular attack he was facing.

Edwards' preparation of the ground is characteristically careful: 'original sin' in theological use refers only to human depravity, whereas in lay use it refers to the (linked) doctrines of depravity and imputation;⁹⁵ depravity means a particular disposition of the heart, which may be discerned by observing what is common to the same event in a wide variety of circumstances.⁹⁶ In the particular case in question, we must be careful to look at the reaction of humanity apart from the effect of divine grace.⁹⁷ Equally, we must not make arguments about the relative preponderance of good and bad: depravity implies that we are always liable to sin, not that we are liable to sin always.⁹⁸ Again, arguing that we are good naturally, but just corrupted by this world is irrelevant: this world is our proper place; if we are corrupt in our proper place then we are corrupt.⁹⁹ On the basis of these foundations, Edwards' seeks to demonstrate the universality of human sin. The texts cited are the usual ones, as are most of the arguments; two of the latter, however, are worthy of further comment.

⁹⁴ Any survey of the literature will demonstrate this - including, most conveniently, Holbrook's in his *Introduction*. See YE3 pp.97-101. My own estimation will follow the minority line - see later.

⁹⁵ YE3 p.107.

⁹⁶ *ibid.* pp.107-109.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p.109.

⁹⁸ *ibid.* pp.120-127.

⁹⁹ *ibid.* pp.125-127.

The first is a cluster of arguments in the second chapter, which is entitled 'Universal Mortality Proves Original Sin.'¹⁰⁰ Edwards is here addressing Taylor's point that death is a great benefit to humanity, given by God for many good purposes.¹⁰¹ For Edwards, death is 'a calamity above all others terrible.'¹⁰² Behind this argument is the Panglossian nature of the Enlightenment thought of which Taylor is such an able representative. Whatever is, is good; death is; so death must be good. Taylor tries hard to defend this position, arguing that death teaches and trains us, and so is to be welcomed as a good gift of God. Edwards responds with almost angry derision - death is a tragedy; Christ meets death as an enemy;¹⁰³ it is the ultimate sign that there is something fundamentally wrong with the world.

Secondly, Edwards constructs arguments for the ubiquity of sin from the dullness of religion in the world.¹⁰⁴ Once again, this highlights a fundamental divergence between Edwards and the coming Enlightenment. The moral calculus of *True Virtue*, which insists that an action's value can be judged only in relation to God, and that heroic deeds in another context are finally sinful, is beyond Taylor. Edwards' point is one I have had cause to mention before now: that which appears good and harmonious viewed against part of reality may yet be seen to be disharmonious with the whole, and hence wrong. A theme, however attractive in itself, will grate if it occurs in a piece of music in a different key.

When Edwards feels he has established the doctrine, by arguments and citations, he turns in Part 4¹⁰⁵ to discuss various objections that are raised. Much of the genuinely interesting material in the book is here. Two areas stand out: the suggestion that this doctrine makes God the author of sin (which speaks directly to the questions about the justice of hell which prompted this examination), and the doctrine of imputation advanced. I will consider these in reverse order:

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p.206.

¹⁰¹ Perhaps Holbrook's statement of Taylor's position will make the point best: 'It is God's love, his fatherly concern for his children's welfare, his grace, that has brought about death.' *YE3* p.32.

¹⁰² *ibid.* p.206.

¹⁰³ *ibid.* p.212.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* pp.147-157.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* pp.373-433.

The doctrine of imputation has provided difficulties throughout the history of the Augustinian tradition of theology. The fact of imputation - that we are guilty by virtue of Adam's sin and holy by virtue of Christ's obedience - is easily derived from a fairly natural reading of Paul's argument in the early chapters of Romans; problems arise when attempts are made to account for this fact theologically. Augustine's own version was developed, like so much of his theology,¹⁰⁶ in the heat of controversy - the Pelagian disputes, in this case. The student of Edwards learns to appreciate the particular difficulties that doing theology controversially brings, and it is a measure of Augustine's greatness that he was able to produce creative and powerful work in the heat of argument so regularly. On the doctrine of imputation, however, he is almost universally regarded as having made a false move.

Augustine argued, simply, that the essence of sin is concupiscence - inordinate desire. Sin is inherited, from Adam and Eve down, because concupiscence is always a part of reproduction as sexual intercourse cannot take place without desire. On an abstract level, this is very neat: it makes sense of troublesome passages concerning sinning in Adam, and the status of the virgin birth is immediately established as the reason for Christ's sinlessness. It is the practical and pastoral consequences concerning the denigration of God's good gift of sexuality, and hence, embodiment which are disastrous; theologically, this ties up with a commonly perceived failure in Augustine's theological scheme to take on board the goodness of creation.¹⁰⁷

There is no need here to explore further attempts to formulate the doctrine.¹⁰⁸ Within the Reformed tradition, Edwards would have found a confused legacy, which sought to move away from Augustine's position without really knowing what, other than the

¹⁰⁶ Of the major works, only *de Trinitate* is wholly the product of reflection at leisure.

¹⁰⁷ For Augustine's position, see the various anti-Pelagian writings (conveniently collected in *NPNF* 1st series vol.V), but especially 'On Marriage and Concupiscence' (*ibid.* pp.260-308).

¹⁰⁸ A long, although not necessarily unbiased, discussion will be found in F.R. Tennant's Hulsean Lectures, published as *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1902, pp.1-112. See also Norman Powell Williams' Bampton Lectures: *The Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study* Longmans, Green & co., London, 1929.

bare fact of imputation, to put in its place.¹⁰⁹ Given this, it is hardly surprising that Edwards should make an original contribution when he comes to this point.

Edwards advances his theory of imputation in the third chapter of part four of *Original Sin*,¹¹⁰ devoted to dealing with the charge that imputation is unjust. Characteristically, the treatment begins with a careful statement of what imputation is. God's covenant with Adam was such that, in every step of His dealings with him, He treated his posterity as one with him.¹¹¹ The essence of Adam's first sin was in his disposition, not in his act, which was merely the outward manifestation of the inward disposition: 'His sin consisted in wickedness of heart, fully sufficient *for*, and entirely amounting *to*, all that appeared in the act he committed.'¹¹² Part of the punishment for this sin was God-forsakenness, resulting in depravity of nature as a fixed principle in Adam, and in all who follow.¹¹³

Taylor had insisted that it was unreasonable and unjust to consider Adam and his posterity, manifestly different individuals, as one. Once again, a standard Enlightenment note is being sounded here: the desire to define my freedom *against* the community, rather than *for* and *by* the community - in this case, the community of the whole human race.¹¹⁴ The precise objections are twofold - that this damages those of us who are descended from Adam, and that it is simply fictional, and so improper, to do this. Edwards simply dismisses the first objection - it was much fairer to humanity to do things this way round, as Adam had far more reason, and so was far more likely, to obey than any who follow. Enlightened pleas of self-sufficiency are met with the contempt they deserve: '...no man's vain opinion of himself, as more fit to be trusted than others, alters the true nature and tendency of things, as they demonstrably are in themselves.'¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Heppe's regular desire to impose order and unanimity on the tradition only makes his witness to confusion on this point more powerful: Heppe, Heinrich, *Reformed Dogmatics* (e.t. G.T. Thomson, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1950) pp.341-348.

¹¹⁰ *YE3* pp.389-412.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p.389.

¹¹² *ibid.* p.390.

¹¹³ *ibid.* pp.390-391.

¹¹⁴ On this point, see Jenson, *op.cit.* pp.154-168; Gunton, Colin E. 'God, Grace and Freedom' in Gunton, Colin E. (ed.) *God and Freedom: Essays in Historical and Systematic Theology* T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1995 pp.119-133.

¹¹⁵ *YE3* p.396.

The second objection, that this oneness between Adam and his descendants is fictional, is where Edwards' novel views are put forward. These depend on an analysis of what is meant by identity: 'the seeming force of the objection arises from ignorance or inconsideration of the degree, in which created identity or oneness with past existence in general, depends on the sovereign constitution and law of the Supreme Author and Disposer of the universe.'¹¹⁶ Only God has 'absolutely independent identity';¹¹⁷ all other identity is dependent on God's pleasure. A tree, for example, is 'so exceeding diverse, many thousand times bigger, and of a very different form, and perhaps not one atom the very same' as the shoot from which it grew, but God has 'in a constant succession communicated to it many of the same qualities, and most important properties, as if it were one.'¹¹⁸ Locke saw personal identity as identity of consciousness;¹¹⁹ Edwards wants to say that it is more than this, but he accepts that this is essential, and insists that it 'depends wholly on a divine establishment.'¹²⁰

Edwards offers a proof for this, at first sight surprising, contention: the existence of a body in a given moment is not necessary, so must be dependent on some cause. That cause is usually thought to be its existence in the previous moment, but this cannot be the case. Firstly, many previous existences are entirely passive - a stone, for example, cannot be considered as exerting itself to cause its continuation. Secondly, the previous existence is, by supposition, no longer existing at the moment of present existence, and nothing can cause an effect in a place, *or a time*, where it is not present. The past moment is gone, and can have no more effect on the present than a moment of existence twenty years ago. So momentary existence must be the immediate action of God.¹²¹

These arguments do not work, of course. Ingenious as the second line is, Edwards had allowed as far back as *Of Atoms* that the condition of being adjacent was

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* p.397.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.* p.400.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* pp.397-398.

¹¹⁹ *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* 2.27.11 (pp.448-449 of the Fraser edition).

¹²⁰ *YE3* p.398.

¹²¹ *ibid.* pp.400-401.

sufficient for cause to apply spatially;¹²² if the temporal analogy may not be made, he needs to demonstrate why. The first argument is simple question-begging: he wishes to argue that something cannot be the cause of its own continuation, on the basis of an assertion that it cannot be the cause of its own continuation. Apparently, Edwards recognises this, since his next move is to allow 'that the established course of nature is sufficient to continue existence, where existence is once given.'¹²³ This prompts him to expose his underlying argument: on the basis of his understanding of the nature of created reality, 'the established course of nature' is nothing other than God's agency. So we have a statement of his standard theme in reference to creation: 'God's *preserving* created things in being is perfectly equivalent to a *continued creation*, or to his creating those things out of nothing at *each moment*.'¹²⁴

I have already discussed the validity of this understanding of creation,¹²⁵ but with it, Edwards' doctrine of imputation follows naturally. If all created identity is arbitrary divine constitution, then to object that God cannot establish such-and-such an identity because to do so would be arbitrary, as Taylor is trying to, is to pursue a signally fruitless line. Jenson sees much of the breakdown of communal identity in the Enlightened nation of the United States as due to precisely this flaw: identity can only be imposed by arbitrary divine decision; to attempt to live without recourse to the divine, the grand Enlightenment experiment, is inevitably to attempt to live without identity, even, in the last analysis of Sartre, identity with myself.¹²⁶

Turning to Edwards' response to the accusation that his doctrine makes God the author of sin, the reply is far less satisfactory. He makes a distinction between the idea of sin as something added to human nature, and the withholding of certain divine influences without which human nature will inevitably fall into sin.¹²⁷ As already noted, part of the punishment for Adam's transgression is God-forsakenness, so all who follow Adam are solely under the influence of natural and inferior principles, and so

¹²² See chapter 3 above.

¹²³ *YE3* p.401

¹²⁴ *ibid.* p.401

¹²⁵ Again, see chapter 3.

¹²⁶ Jenson, *op.cit.* pp.150-151.

¹²⁷ *YE3* pp.380-381.

become wholly corrupt, as Adam did.¹²⁸ Thus a distinction between God creating sin and permitting sin is introduced, but the force of Edwards' argument depends on a further invocation of his understanding of providence as continuing creation, and a simple *tu quoque* argument: if Edwards' position makes God the author of sin because human beings are created in sin, then so does Taylor's, because human beings are permitted to continue in sin.¹²⁹ This is Edwards' first response to the same issue when he turns to it in *Freedom of the Will*:¹³⁰ once again, the *tu quoque* argument is to the fore.

In order to be as fair as possible to Edwards at this point, we must recognise that he assumes that there is no position which does not make God the 'author of sin' in some sense - God created all things, and so, finally, all things come from Him.¹³¹ Edwards' point in his *tu quoque* is that this is no more the case for a 'Calvinist' than for an 'Arminian'. This given, his point must be accepted, although we might have wished he had displayed more concern about the issue.

So much for *Original Sin*. At this juncture some recapitulation may be helpful. For Edwards, hell is useful, in that it glorifies God - in that His justice and majesty are displayed, and in seeing hell the saints are given a greater sense of His love and mercy. In all this, the argument is only valid if, in justice, every human being deserves hell. God is not being just, and is acting meanly, not majestically, if the damned do not deserve what is visited upon them, and there is no mercy, at least, displayed to the saints, if they are receiving no less than they deserve. So Edwards' understanding of God's self-glorification at this point, and his defence of hell, both turn on the question of justice.

¹²⁸ *ibid.* p.383. Once again, Edwards is reminiscent of Aquinas in his understanding of depravity. This is all the more striking since Calvin, at the start of the Reformed tradition, had offered a different, and arguably better, understanding, of every human faculty being ruined, rather than a divine faculty being taken away and the rest left untouched. See *Inst.* II.1.8-11; *S.T.* Ia IIae q.85.

¹²⁹ *ibid.* pp.386-388.

¹³⁰ *YEl* pp.397-399.

¹³¹ '...it is impossible in the nature of things to be otherwise...' *ibid.* pp.399-400. This point depends, of course, on the supposition that Edwards' contention that views of the will as self-determining are incoherent is accepted.

Edwards sees justice in terms of retribution. Any sin, he argues, incurs infinite guilt, because it is committed against God, who is infinitely worthy. So any sin deserves infinite punishment. On the basis of the doctrine of imputation outlined in *Original Sin*, I have followed Edwards' argument that it is just for God to establish the federal scheme, whereby we are all guilty of Adam's sin. Were Edwards to adopt an 'Arminian' scheme, his point would now be proved.¹³² For reasons that, as I have indicated in the previous chapter, I find compelling, he does not. The question that remains, then, is whether it can be just for God to create human beings for no purpose other than to glorify Himself by damning them, as, according to Edwards, He does.

The responses I have found in Edwards reduce to a bracketing of the problem of theodicy. He *argues* that his opponents have as much trouble with this issue as he does; on the basis of this, he *asserts* that there is no theological scheme which can offer a better answer, and so takes refuge in the classical 'who are you, O man, to answer back to God?' line. This, however, will not do. In federal theology, with a broadly nominalist understanding of God's goodness, this approach was available; even for Calvin, who seems to be more realist in his thinking, an invocation of the doctrine of accommodation made this a possible (if not a useful¹³³) line; for Edwards, however, with an understanding of virtue that is not just realist but Lockean, so that what is just must be self-evidently so (at least to the saints) such an approach simply could not be acceptable.¹³⁴ Edwards must have believed, on his own premises, that

¹³² This points to an interesting historical point: the connection, at various times in theological history, between predestinarianism and universalism. The example closest to my concerns is Morris, K.R. 'The Puritan Roots of American Universalism' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991) pp.457-487 – see especially pp.457-458.

¹³³ To the extent that Calvin's attempts to give assurance to believers through the doctrine of election founder on the hidden decree, as Barth, amongst others, suggest (*C.D.* II/2 pp.334-339), this move is the problem.

¹³⁴ This point is perhaps best demonstrated by comparisons with what has gone before: 'beauty' is self-defining, according to *True Virtue*; the 'new simple idea' of God given in salvation 'naturally shines' – justice, then, must also be visibly just, at least to the regenerate mind. At one point in the *Miscellanies* Edwards seems to accept this argument, but suggest that there may well be things in the world that, although they make sense, we will not be able to understand until their meaning is revealed to us in heaven. This, he suggests, is in fact quite likely, as it will give us a greater sense of God's perfections, and so lead to God being glorified all the more. *Miscellanies* 654 (unpublished).

the transparent justice of his position was demonstrable, even if he did not have a demonstration. A comfortable refuge in mystery was simply not an option.¹³⁵

5.5 Concluding Reflections

For Edwards hell, like every other area of the great drama of God's actions in creation and redemption, was bent towards the increase of God's glory. For it to achieve this purpose, he needed to demonstrate that it was entirely in accord with divine justice. My contention thus far has been that, finally, he failed to do that. This final section is an attempt to explore other discussions concerning the nature and use of hell in order both to see how Edwards' thought may be appropriated, and to discover possible lines for recasting Edwards' doctrine in a stronger form.

Firstly, I wish to return to the incoherence that I have suggested is present in Edwards' position: even bracketing the question of theodicy, his arguments concerning the usefulness of hell prompt a question. If we accept that God's perfections are most glorious in their exercise, and that justice is a perfection of God that is appropriately glorified, and that God's justice is best displayed in the awfulness of His judgement on sin, then some doctrine of hell does seem to follow. Equally, if the saints' sense of God's mercy and grace is stronger through seeing what they have been saved from, then again, hell would seem to be necessary. But the question presents itself: how many people must be in hell for God to be glorified? There is, of course, an obvious answer: one. And the Creed will tell us who that One is: 'He descended into hell...'

Edwards was a Reformed theologian, so I will invoke a Reformed understanding of the *descensus*. Calvin, in the *Institutes*,¹³⁶ identifies Christ's descent into hell with His experiencing the pain of separation from the Father on account of sin on the cross.

¹³⁵ A point made by Walker about the attempted fideist defence of the doctrine of hell in general is relevant here: whilst the appeal to *intellectual* mystery may be fairly made in theological discussion (Walker offers the example of the doctrine of the Trinity), it is illegitimate to draw an analogy to *ethical* mystery - as with the doctrine of hell. Walker, *op.cit.* pp.28-29.

Whether we wish to adopt some further conception of the harrowing of hell or not, that Jesus Christ endured both the *poena sensus* and the *poena damni* on the cross seems beyond doubt. If it is really necessary for the saints in heaven to have a sight of what they have been saved from, if they really need some visual reminder of the strength of God's hatred of sin, then both are there for them: the Lamb bearing the marks of slaughter is seated on the throne; the 'wounds yet visible above' are indeed 'in beauty glorified.'¹³⁷ If God's justice must be displayed to be glorified, if His mercy may not be fully glorified without a sight of the terribleness of His anger, then the cross, not hell, must be where these things come to pass.¹³⁸

This raises the point I have mentioned in passing several times in the discussion in this chapter in an acute form: In chapter 2 of this thesis I argued that Edwards' account of God's self-glorification was Trinitarian, and indeed, that it would not work were it not so. In chapter 3, I sought to demonstrate that, for Edwards, creation glorifies God again in a Trinitarian manner, and by imaging forth the gospel story, and the same is true of redemption in chapter 4. Now, in his doctrine of hell, the same language is being employed - hell, too, is a locus for God's self-glorification - but the language must mean something different. The trinitarian vision of God, and the overarching metanarrative of the gospel story, seemingly have no part to play here. This is the point where I believe that Edwards finally falls foul of Luther's outspoken challenge - here, in the depths of hell, God's glory is not seen through suffering and the cross.

I will return to this, my major theme, for the concluding comments of this chapter, but a further point may usefully be made before that: a comparison of Edwards' doctrine with current writing on hell is instructive. A survey of recent works reveals that this debate has preoccupied philosophical theologians far more than exegetes or

¹³⁶ *Inst.* II.16.8-12.

¹³⁷ Edwards does in fact link the sufferings of the Christ with the sufferings of the damned in *Miscellanies* 516, but without drawing any theological conclusions.

¹³⁸ The cross as God's fundamental act of self-glorification is, of course, a prominent theme in John's Gospel. I shall have more to say about this in my critique of Edwards' overall understanding of glory in the final chapter.

systematicians.¹³⁹ Some contributions are easily dismissed - for instance, Marilyn McCord Adams, whose rejection of the rationality of belief in hell depends on a series of analogies along the lines of 'if I were to do x, we would surely find it unacceptable if I were to be punished by y.'¹⁴⁰ All such a procedure proves, of course, is that the doctrine of hell is out of step with the general opinions of twentieth century Western liberal intellectuals, which is hardly a startling result. More serious arguments are offered by writers such as Wallis and Kvanvig,¹⁴¹ who at least begin with data of revelation, in particular the claim that 'God is loving' or 'God is good'.¹⁴² On the basis of an analysis of what is entailed in making these claims, usually suggesting that 'God' at least implies omnipotence and 'loving' and least implies 'desires the happiness of every conscious creature,' they arrive at a variety of modified doctrines of hell, ranging from John Hick's rejection of any concept of hell,¹⁴³ to attempts to defend a fairly traditional understanding by invoking libertarian ideas of free will.¹⁴⁴

When these works are set alongside Edwards' defence of God's self-glorification by condemning certain creatures to hell, a number of points stand out. Firstly, my examination of Edwards' idea of God's self-glorification in general has demonstrated a concern for God's aseity, expressed in terms of all God's 'needs' finding perfect fulfilment in His life *ad intra* as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Ideas of aseity and, much more significantly, of the Trinity, find little place in the recent philosophical-theological literature on hell. There is an assumption that if God is loving, that must mean He is loving towards us, an assumption that depends on interpreting 'God'

¹³⁹ See, for instance, Wallis, Jerry L. *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (Library of Religious Philosophy vol.9) University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1992; Kvanvig, Jonathan L. *The Problem of Hell* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1993; Talbot, Thomas 'The Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment' *Faith and Philosophy* 7.1 (Jan. 1990) pp.19-42.

¹⁴⁰ Adams, Marilyn McCord 'Hell and the God of Justice' *Religious Studies* 11(1975) pp.433-447.

¹⁴¹ *opera cit.*

¹⁴² These two are often regarded as synonyms; see Wallis, pp.83-84 for an example.

¹⁴³ Hick, John *Evil and the God of Love* Macmillan, London, 1985 pp.341-345. Hick's point has been effectively rebutted by Plantinga, using a 'free-will' defence. See Plantinga, Alvin *God, Freedom and Evil* George Allen & Unwin, London, 1975 pp.29-64. Actually, Hick shrinks from full-blown universalism, because he believes that attributing freedom of indifference to human creatures, as he is committed to doing, holds out the possibility that some will continually reject God's proffered salvation (p.343). An epigrammatic illustration of two fundamentally different approaches to theology offers itself here: Barth will not contemplate a universalist position, because he is afraid of compromising God's freedom; Hick, wanting to embrace universalism, ultimately has to refuse to do so in order to protect the freedom of human beings.

monadically, and necessitates making the perfection of His existence dependent on His creatures. The latter point, and a departure from aseity, may be an acceptable modification to the Christian doctrine of God, but it appears that it is only required if the doctrine of the Trinity is denied, which is no modification but a simple departure from Christian theology.

Edwards' struggle with goodness as an attribute of God is significant here: his early *Miscellanies* entries suggested that goodness, of all God's attributes, needed to find exercise to be perfect. As his thought moved on, it is clear that he realised that this was a threat to God's aseity, and found in the doctrine of the Trinity a way to speak of every attribute of God finding perfect exercise without any need for the creation. So, we read in the *Miscellanies*:

The deists, unitarians and Socinians who deny the doctrine of the Trinity cannot explain how God is essentially good and just antecedently to and independent of the creation of finite [supply 'beings'] for God cannot be emanently [*sic*] good and just when there is no object of his beneficence and equity. If then to be essentially eternally & necessarily good and just he must be so in himself he must therefore find an infinite object within himself to whom he displays all his essential love beneficence and equity.¹⁴⁵

Now, this defence is not by any means complete; an obvious argument may be made, for example, that, having chosen to create, God's goodness implies that He will be good to His creation. This is certainly the case, but an important move has been made, in that this is now a second order principle, not something bound up with God's ability to be Himself - there is, in a sense, more room. God's love is perfectly exercised *ad intra*; God will be loving *ad extra*, because that is His nature, but His *bene esse*, or even *esse*, is no longer bound up with His lovingkindness to His creation.

What comes out most clearly from this comparison, however, is how much depends on which words are privileged; Edwards (and more recent scholars who explicitly follow him) privilege words such as 'mercy' and 'grace', and insist that there can be

¹⁴⁴ Wallis, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁵ *Miscellanies* 1253, p.5 of Schafer's transcript. Although the text is not entirely clear, this appears to be a quotation that Edwards recorded from Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles of Religion*. My discussion in Chapter 2, however, will have indicated that the point is a regular one in Edwards' writings.

no assumption or dependence upon such attributes - 'the quality of mercy is not strained,' to quote Shakespeare.¹⁴⁶ Modern writers, with perhaps more immediate Biblical warrant, use words like 'love' and 'goodness', and insist that there can be no exceptions to the exercise of such attributes.¹⁴⁷ A way through this apparent *impasse* is offered by Aquinas' insistence on the simplicity of God.¹⁴⁸ Once this idea is taken seriously, the game of playing off one attribute of God against another is no longer a possibility.¹⁴⁹ Rather, we have to find a way of taking every perfection seriously in everything we say - a position that, of course, presents a challenge to both the modern discussions and to Edwards and his followers. The former stress God's love and fail to account for God's freedom; the latter (arguably) fail to take sufficient notice of the love and goodness of God in seeking to preserve an account of His freedom in their doctrines of grace. It is indeed 'the quality of mercy not to be strained,' but it is Allah who is called merciful; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is unambiguously identified with love.¹⁵⁰

This points towards a deeper theological reason to be unhappy with Edwards' whole concept of God's self-glorification in the damnation of sinners, a reason that John Colwell focuses on in his Drew Lecture.¹⁵¹ On the basis of the gospel story we simply cannot accept that God glorifies Himself in two equal and opposite ways, in the display of His justice and the display of His grace. In speaking of the Father of Jesus Christ, we cannot speak of God's freedom without immediately also speaking of His love. Nor, contrary to the modern discussions of hell, can we speak of His love without immediately speaking of His freedom. This is language that calls to mind

¹⁴⁶ *The Merchant of Venice* Act IV Scene 1; Portia makes this observation after stating 'Then must the Jew be merciful', eliciting the response 'On what compulsion must I? tell me that' from Shylock. For the point in Edwards, see for instance, 'Eternity of Hell Torments' BT2 p.83; 'All God's Method's are Most Reasonable' YE14 p.172. See also Davidson, *art.cit.*

¹⁴⁷ Walker, Kvanvig *opera cit.*

¹⁴⁸ In fact, although this idea is associated with Aquinas, he found it in Augustine's *De Trinitate*. See S.T. 1a Q3 art.7 and *De Trin.* VI.6-7, where simplicity is used to demonstrate that the difference between the Persons is not accidental but relational.

¹⁴⁹ Perhaps an example would be helpful at this point: there is a hymn that speaks of the cross as the 'trysting place where heaven's love and heaven's justice meet.' Whatever the merits of this as religious poetry, theologically it is ruled out by this point: 'heaven's love' and 'heaven's justice' can never be separated, and so cannot be thought of as meeting.

¹⁵⁰ The obvious references are I John 4 and I Corinthians 13, but I would also seek to argue that this point is required by the gospel narrative - if God is as He is in Jesus Christ, then 'love' must be an appropriate word to describe His perfection.

¹⁵¹ *art.cit.* pp.303-305.

Karl Barth's basic statement about the reality of God in volume II of the *Church Dogmatics*, 'the One who loves in freedom.'¹⁵²

To speak only of 'grace', 'mercy' and 'freedom', as Edwards does, leads inevitably to the double decree and the vision of God creating some people only to torture them in for all eternity unimaginable ways - although Edwards stood in a tradition that tried hard to help our imaginations at this point! To speak only of 'love' and 'goodness' leads to a variety of approaches ranging from Origenist universalism, through Hick's near-universalism, to broadly Wesleyan Arminianism. So it will not do to speak in either of these ways. We must acknowledge that God is God, against to the latter, and that God is love, against the former, and so, as Barth does, deny universalism, but so affirm the grace and mercy of God that we are constantly drawn in that direction.¹⁵³ Only by doing this can we do justice to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ.

A summary seems in order. I began by seeking to place Edwards within his tradition, and so to highlight the 'vision across the chasm', the one feature of his doctrine of hell that was genuinely out of step with contemporary thought. On the basis of this, I sought to expose Edwards' underlying concerns in his discussions of hell, showing once again that the promotion of God's glory was central. In discussing how Edwards saw God being glorified here, I underlined the justice of hell as the primary concern and argued that, from Edwards' own position, this was finally indefensible. My discussion has once again, from two different angles, sought to show that this failure is a result of a prior failure to let the gospel story inform his position sufficiently.

A quotation from Dante stood at the head of this chapter: it was not obvious to me, and I suspect will not be to others, but the commentators assure us that the famous legend that stands over the portal of hell in the poet's vision borrows standard Trinitarian language - the 'Divine Power' is the Father, the 'Supreme Wisdom' the Son, and the 'Primal Love' the Spirit. More than that, the next line ('before me

¹⁵² Title of §28 (II/1 p.257) and expounded throughout the rest of II/1 and II/2.

¹⁵³ It is bizarre that there is still a debate about whether Barth was a universalist, given his repeated denials of the position. The question of how he thought he was able to avoid universalism is far more

nothing was created if not eternal') surely consciously echoes the Christological claims of Wisdom in Proverbs ch.8. I commented that there seemed to be less discomfort generally with ideas in Dante than with very similar ones in Edwards; whilst I am sure that this is for a bad reason - a patronising attitude towards the medievals - there could be a good reason for the same point of view: the poet, unlike the preacher, when it came to painting the flames of hell, at least, would not speak of a God who was not Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

This chapter has been my most critical of Edwards. Here I have indicated the point where I believe that his theology breaks down in a major way - his own best instincts of God's Trinitarian, gospel-shaped, self-glorification fail him. Finally, Luther's charge will stick. I will explore the possible reasons for this failure in the next, and final, chapter, as I seek to pull together my examinations and criticisms of Edwards' vision of God's self-glorification in different areas in order to construct a coherent whole, and some indication of the chief strengths and weaknesses of Edwards' theology.

interesting. To my mind the best contribution is Colwell, J.E. *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Theology of Karl Barth* Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 1989

Chapter 6

Soli Deo Gloria!

But ... it does not suffice that the principle of Soli Deo Gloria be formally commemorated at the beginning and at the end as in most standard theologies, to be wholly forgotten in the interim. Such theology does indeed conventionally affirm that God could create the world only for his own glorification; but this statement can be understood without scandal only if, in the course of the total theological development of God's saving action, one is enlightened as to what this glorification actually consists of.¹

‘He deserves to be called a theologian,’ said Martin Luther, ‘who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.’ von Balthasar’s word ‘scandal’ is less pointed and so perhaps fairer than Luther’s uncompromising *conditio*, but the point is the same. I have tried to argue in this thesis that Edwards is more faithful to this charge than the tradition around him in every area except one. This final chapter is an attempt to pull the threads together, and to suggest some theological results of my examination of Edwards. Firstly, a summary seems in order:

6.1 Summary of the Foregoing Argument

God created the world for the promotion of His own glory. That much is common to the tradition. What is somewhat less common, in the Reformed tradition at least, is any sustained discussion of what it might mean to say this. Edwards offers detailed analysis of the question, which I explored at length in chapter 2. I argued that God’s act of self-glorification for Edwards was described using Trinitarian grammar, and so was an act of divine *ekstasis*, of the sending of the Son and Spirit by the Father. This *ekstasis* is directed towards a sharing or enlargement of the triune life, as the Church, finding its being in the Son and filled with the Spirit, shares God’s own life and joys. A comparison with van Mastricht sought to make the point that the strong doctrines of

¹ Hans Ur Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol VI: *The Old Covenant* p.26

immanence and *theosis* present in Edwards' account were a direct result of the Trinitarian nature of that account.

However, the question that I have continually asked of Edwards was already pressing here. A comparison of Edwards with Barth found many similarities, which I suggested was difficult, given the very different theological climate of (say) 'Sinners in the Hands of an angry God' and (say) 'The Obedience of the Son of God' in *C.D.* IV/1.² It was at this point that I first suggested that the reason for this was a possible failure of Edwards' account to be adequately crucicentric.

In chapter 3, this divine act of self-glorification was explored with reference to the created order and its history. An analysis of Edwards' metaphysics in the light of the central philosophical questions of the early modern era, and an account of his doctrine of history led me to suggest that Edwards' theology of creation was a largely successful attempt to hold to Trinitarian doctrine in the face of the philosophical ambiguities of modernity. In particular, I argued for three points: Firstly that Edwards needed to find an intellectually satisfying 'theistic Newtonianism' if he wished to apply a teleology of the created order, and that in what has been referred to as his idealism he succeeded in this; secondly that Edwards' metaphysics was much more robust than Bishop Berkeley's apparently very similar system - this again due to Edwards' thoroughgoing Trinitarianism; and thirdly that Edwards' typological scheme, freely extended to nature and history, was the content he gave to this teleology - that nature and history were simply the network of the self-revealing and self-giving of God, and could be interpreted as such through the gospel story.

Chapter 4 moved to the realm of soteriology, and an attempt to retell the gospel story which interprets nature and history. Once again, the gift of salvation was seen to be mediated by the Son and the Spirit, and so the gospel story is (for Edwards) a narrative of dynamic inter-Trinitarian relationships. It seemed that here, also, any accusation that Edwards was not appropriately crucicentric would be shown to be false, as he speaks of the cross as God's first and best thought. It was precisely at this point, however, when the first discordant note was heard, as the perdition of the

² §59 of the *Dogmatics* IV/1 pp.157-357.

damned seemed to lack any Trinitarian logic. I suggested that, given the logic uncovered in the previous chapters, this left the non-elect in the perilous position of lacking true humanity, or indeed true being - and one would have thought that their position was quite perilous enough in the old Calvinist logic without heaping this on them! I ended the chapter by suggesting that this flaw was not unique to Edwards but common to the Reformed tradition.

Having suggested that the doctrine of perdition was the locus for the flaw in Edwards' theology, I explored this in chapter five, where Edwards' doctrine of hell was subjected to a detailed scrutiny. A comparison of Edwards' writings on hell with the immediate tradition demonstrated that certain features were distinctive, and these all pointed towards the (unsurprising) conclusion that Edwards' doctrine of hell was controlled by the use of hell in promoting God's glory. I argued, however, that the specific ways in which Edwards claimed hell promoted God's glory finally rely on unsustainable positions concerning, particularly, the nature and visibility of divine justice. I ended this chapter by suggesting, using comparisons with Barth and the more recent philosophical tradition, that the failure here was precisely that Edwards' doctrine of perdition was neither Trinitarian in form nor crucicentric.

So, the thesis I proposed was that Edwards' account of God's self glorification finally failed because it was not sufficiently grounded in the gospel story - particularly the passion narratives. In my account of Edwards' theology I hope I have demonstrated this, and indeed refined it to pinpoint the locus of the failure in the doctrine of perdition.

This, then, is my thesis. The remainder of this chapter will be an attempt to assess the significance - or otherwise - of this thesis for the study of Edwards but, more significantly, as this is an exercise in systematic theology, for the theological task as a whole.

6.2 The Cross as the Locus of God's Self-Glorification

The first question to be asked, however, is the most basic: Edwards gives a theological account of God's glorification; in exploring that account, I have thus far

asked about its internal and theological coherence without relating it particularly to the Scriptures. This first section of evaluation is an attempt to do that, to ask if Edwards' account is not just coherent but right, when measured by the canon of Scripture. I suggest that it is: in the gospel stories, it is not the works of power which primarily declare God's glory, although this is a feature. It is not even the resurrection and ascension that do this. Rather, it is the condescension, suffering and death of Jesus. This is the force behind Luther's bold assertions.

This is true in all four gospels, although in different ways. Amongst the synoptics, Luke's account of the birth of Jesus has the angels declaring the *gloria in excelsis* - but declaring it to shepherds, not kings, and declaring it to announce an act of divine self-limitation. The words and works of Jesus lead those around to marvel and so to glorify God throughout the first three gospels,³ but the crowds are precisely those who desire to 'look upon the visible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened', and so to 'call good evil and evil good', to quote Luther once more. The crowds, that is, are those who seek a Messiah after the patterns that Jesus rejected when tempted by Satan. The theme is particularly interesting in Luke's gospel, with its pictures of the way the Gentiles are more open to God's plan than God's people of old. It is the centurion who glorifies God when he sees Jesus die, not the people who 'were entrusted with the oracles of God' (Romans 3:2).

It is the fourth gospel, however, with its rich usage of the language of glory in connection with the cross, that makes the point most emphatically. Apart from the comment that Jesus 'had not yet been glorified' in chapter 7, the linked concepts of Jesus' glorification, and the glorification of the Father in Jesus, that form such a strong motif throughout the latter part of the gospel begin in chapter 11 - Lazarus' illness is to be the occasion for God's glory to be revealed and for Jesus to be glorified. As a work of power, this may seem to disprove my point, but this miracle leads directly to the plot to kill Jesus, and so is precisely the occasion for God's glory to be revealed in the way I have suggested. As the narrative moves on repeated

³ For example, the healing of the paralytic in Mt.9:1-8, parallels Mk.2:1-12 and Lk.5:17-26, results in all three gospels in the crowds giving glory to God.

references to Jesus' death as God's act of triune self-glorification are part of the literary dynamic that pushes towards the cry of *Tetelestai* that is the moment of climax in the gospel. In 12:23-24 'the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified,' an assertion immediately followed by the image of a grain of wheat dying in order to be fruitful; 'Father, glorify your name!' is the prayer of obedience that Jesus offers when He will not pray 'Father, save me from this hour' in the Johannine parallel to the events of Gethsemane. Judas' decision to betray his master is followed by another description of the reflex glorification of Father and Son in the event of the cross in 13:31-32 - and so on through the farewell discourses, until the great priestly prayer of Jesus in chapter 17 begins with assertions and petitions about the glory that the Son gives to the Father and the glory that the Father will give to the Son at Calvary. Strikingly, in the chapters that describe the resurrection appearances of Jesus, there is only one further reference to God's glory, in 21:19, and concerning the way that the apostle Peter would glorify God in his own death. The link between the display of God's glory and the cross is evident.

Space precludes the extension of this argument into areas of Scripture other than the gospels, but the point could, I think, be carried there also: In the Old Testament, *kabod* and its derivatives refer (when applied to God) always to an act of self-manifestation, of revelation of God's character. In particular, the presence of God in the tabernacle and then the temple is the presence of God's glory,⁴ and the later chapters of Isaiah link the glory of God with His salvific action.⁵ These two themes, and the general theme of God's presence or self-revelation, could form the basis of an argument that the crucifixion is the culmination of the language of glory in the Old Testament.⁶ Equally, in the New Testament, whilst the language of glory is more eschatological, describing the honour that will be given to God when what He has done is finally understood, what God has done is centred on the death and resurrection of Jesus.

⁴ Ex.40:34ff.; I Ki.8:11.

⁵ For example, Is.40:3ff.; 43:7.

⁶ One might also refer to the reference to Jesus' glory in the Johannine Prologue, where the language gathers up many of these Old Testament motifs - the tabernacle, the Exodus, later, the temple - and points forwards towards the new locus of glorification that the cross will be.

If all this is correct, what does it mean for a theological account of God's self-glorification? Here I return to Edwards' analysis, as I described it in chapter 2 of this thesis. God's glory is the display and communication of His perfections, which are known and loved by His creatures. It is clear that Edwards believed that God is known primarily through the gospel story, and thus particularly through the humiliation and death of Jesus Christ, so the Cross is indeed the primary locus for the display of God's perfections, and hence our knowledge of them. Christian worship is the central expression of creation's love for the Creator – worship that finds its beginnings in baptism in the Spirit and into Christ's death, and which finds its consummation in the invitation 'Take, eat – this is my body, broken for you', by the power of the Spirit. So, again, our love for God's perfections is Cross-centred. Finally, the communication of God's perfections: Edwards interpreted this by using categories of participation, of indwelling the Son and being indwelt by the Spirit. Without extensive discussion of Biblical texts, it is clear that these are at least major Pauline pictures of salvation, and the argument might be made that they are *the* central categories. Soteriology, of course, is a doctrine centred on the gospel. It seems appropriate, then, to claim that, if Edwards' definitions of God's self-glorification are adequate to the task he puts them to, of describing God's purposes for the world, then he was right to insist that these purposes are Gospel-centred, and wrong at the point where he fell away from his own best insight, and spoke of God being glorified in abstraction from the gospel story.

All of which, however, is still not enough, and a final question needs to be asked: is Edwards correct to identify God's purposes in the world with self-glorification, as he describes it? The question here is one of substance, not terminology: I have indicated that the language of 'glory' was common in this connection, but also that the content that Edwards gives to this language was original, and so it would be possible to conclude that the language was appropriately used, but that Edwards filled it out in an inadequate way. Equally, it would be possible to conclude that Edwards' account of God's purposes in creating the world is of great value, but that the traditional language of glory is inadequate to it.

I have already, in my initial exposition of Edwards' discussion, addressed some of the more obvious questions that could be raised:⁷ the suspicion of Neoplatonist emanationism can easily be laid to rest; equally, Edwards has a ready defence to the charge that his account is unworthy of God in that it makes Him appear selfish; the account is coherent on its own terms, and appears to be solidly based in Scripture. The point has now come when this issue needs to be explored more systematically; in what follows, my agreement with, and borrowings from, Edwards' own discussions will be clear.

The first point is one of possibility: can we know God's basic purposes? It might seem that a pious and humble confession of ignorance is appropriate here but, as the Reformed tradition never tired of reminding us in discussing predestination, whatever God has revealed of Himself to us is for our own good, and we do ourselves disservice and God dishonour if we fail to confess what He has revealed, just as much as if we pretend to know that which He has not. More than this, however, there are three pressing systematic reasons for insisting that we can know. Firstly, simple ignorance concerning God's first purposes is likely to lead to the worst forms of nominalism - whilst we know, believe in and love the God who saves us, there will be a God behind this God about whom we know nothing, a prior purpose in God that lies hidden and makes everything we do know second-order, and so untrustworthy. Secondly, this postulate is likely to lead to a sectarian theology, in that theology is able to deal adequately with the Church, but not with the world - professing ignorance of its being and purpose.⁸ Thirdly, and most tellingly, whether we construct it more philosophically in terms of God's simplicity, or in a more narrative-based manner in terms of faithfulness and singleness of mind, if we claim to know any of God's ultimate purposes, we must assume some knowledge of them all. God does not intend one thing when He creates and quite a different thing when He redeems; His purposes are at least coherent and arguably identical. Edwards' arguments, therefore, about God's having one chief end in creating the world, are sound.

⁷ See chapter 2, above, particularly the end of section 2.3.

⁸ I suspect that this error could be charged to at least some of the various Anabaptists and Spiritualists who formed what has become known as the 'Radical Reformation'.

So, God's purpose in creating should be knowable and should be unified - and unified with His purposes in redeeming as well. What is this purpose? Here, Edwards' arguments may be accepted almost without qualification; his examination of Biblical texts is thorough and convincing and, whilst he does not always keep the wider sweep of the Scriptural narrative in the foreground, the conclusions he comes to, that God's purpose is that He should be known, loved and experienced through the giving of His Son and Spirit, coheres very well with the central thrust of the gospel.

What are we to make of this? Firstly, Edwards was right in linking the revelation and overflow of God's glory so thoroughly to the gospel story. It is not just that God is active in the world in making His character known, a character that is so overwhelmingly beautiful that all who see and understand will necessarily be drawn to praise and glorify Him; it is that God makes His character known only and precisely through His self-giving in the gospel - fundamentally, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Secondly, Edwards' failure to carry this through with relation to the doctrine of perdition was not just a failure of logic or coherence in his particular system, but a failure of theology - it lacks coherence, not just with the rest of Edwards' thought, but also with the Biblical texts. Any theology that claims to be Biblical must, amongst many other conditions, refuse to speak of God's self-glorification apart from the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. I will return to this point, and suggest corrections to Edwards' fundamental scheme, later in this conclusion. Before that, however, I will explore the relevance of my thesis for the study of Edwards.

6.3 *The Interpretation of Edwards' Theology*

If the thesis I have argued is to be of any great use in furthering the understanding of Edwards, a second thesis must be maintained: that the concept of God's self-glorification is at least not peripheral to Edwards' theology as a whole. The survey of Edwards' *Miscellanies* in chapter 2 should be sufficient to demonstrate that the question of the purpose of creation was a recurrent one for Edwards; throughout the remainder of the thesis other evidence for the centrality of the theme has been

uncovered and highlighted, usually in footnotes.⁹ Perry Miller's claim that *True Virtue* and *The End of Creation* are the only works in the Edwards corpus that are not in some way or other occasioned by controversy¹⁰ could also be cited as evidence for this contention.¹¹

It would be audacious in the extreme to claim that the concept of divine self-glorification was *the* central theme of Edwards' theology, and such a claim would require an analysis of a number of other themes that scholars have identified as important to Edwards to demonstrate their peripheral nature. I will, however, address the question of the central categories of Edwards' thought in a more modest way. Generally, no doubt because of the popularity of the revival writings, Edwards has been analysed in terms of human response to God. So, for example, Conrad Cherry centred his discussion on faith; several commentators have found the question of the nature of 'the sense of the heart' to be determinative, and Anri Morimoto looked at salvation.¹² The chief contribution, in my estimation, of a more recent work, McClymond's *Encounters with God*,¹³ lies in the recognition that Edwards' thought was God-centred. This was not missed by earlier commentators (Holbrook's description of 'theological objectivism' springs to mind¹⁴) but has never perhaps been

⁹ Chapter 3 indicated that Edwards' natural typology depended on a prior commitment to teleology - see pp. 105-107. Chapter 4 found Edwards defending Calvinism, on the basis that to do otherwise would be to detract from God's glory (see the introductory remarks, and n.92), and discussed how apparently conflicting statements indicating on the one hand that the gospel story is foundational, and on the other that God's self-glorification is, could be reconciled (see my final comments on predestination, pp.129-130). Chapter 5 demonstrated that the chief use of hell, in Edwards' mind, was that it promotes God's glory - see section 5.3, pp.180-181.

¹⁰ '*The Nature of True Virtue* is Edwards' only purely non-polemical work...' (p.285). See also p.51. Miller finds evidence of some controversial intent in *The End of Creation*, hence the quotation, but recognises both the linked nature of the *Two Dissertations* and *True Virtue*'s dependence on *The End of Creation*. Hence, *The End of Creation* is not occasioned by controversy (as, for instance, the revival treatises, the defences of Calvinism and the ecclesiological works are), although it contains controversial material.

¹¹ Similarly, the reader of Edwards' *Miscellanies* will observe how many of the regular themes therein are controversial. Obvious examples would include perseverance, justification *sole fide*, or the long sections devoted to apologetics on the latter third of the collection. The regular entries on the question of the 'End of Creation' are not unique in dealing with a subject Edwards turned to out of interest rather than necessity, but I suspect an argument could be made that, of the non-controversial subjects, this is at least amongst those to which Edwards turned most frequently.

¹² Morimoto, A. *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1995

¹³ McClymond, M.J. *Encounters with God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998. See particularly pp.4, 28-30.

¹⁴ Holbrook, Clyde A. *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1973 pp.2-7.

given the prominence it deserves. In stressing a reflexive act of God as a significant theme in Edwards' thought, my study lends weight to the idea that one gets closer to the centre of that system by focusing on God in Himself, rather than on human relationships to God.

However, my study also moves this claim forward: it is not the bare fact of God, but the dynamic life of God, that is so central to Edwards. Hence my repeated stress on the Trinity: the being and history of the world is a generous overflowing of the being and life of the Triune God, that finds its meaning in the eschatological enlargement of that life. Such a vision would be either meaningless or pantheistic without a robust and active doctrine of the Trinity. McClymond indicated that Edwards' theocentric metaphysics in *The Mind* was a 'turning of the tables on Enlightenment anthropocentrism',¹⁵ which is certainly true, but I have sought to take this further in my third chapter, arguing that Edwards offered a Trinitarian response to the assumed metaphysics of the Enlightenment which allowed a continued robust theism in the face of materialistic mechanism or deism - this argument sustained in part at least by a comparison with Berkeley.

This also points towards a second area where I believe my work adds something to the study of Edwards' thought. I indicated in my initial survey of recent Edwardsean scholarship that a recurrent theme has been 'Edwards and American culture', a theme that has usually depended on an identification of America as the Enlightenment nation, and an estimate of Edwards' Enlightenment credentials. Jenson has argued the thesis that Edwards offers a theological critique of the Enlightenment,¹⁶ and hence a theological critique that has special relevance to America; the third chapter of my own study adds weight to the first part of this thesis and, perhaps, by separating the criticism of the Enlightenment from the criticism of America, goes further towards identifying Edwards' theology as a critical resource available for theologians of all nationalities.

¹⁵ *op.cit.* p.29.

¹⁶ *op.cit. passim*, but see especially pp.3-12 & 194-196.

The strand of scholarship that I described as ‘Edwards and postmodernity’ in my initial chapter is of particular interest here:¹⁷ this suggests that Edwards offers a critique, not just of the American form and appropriation of modernity, but of modernity itself. Despite occasional suggestions that one of the defining features of Enlightened/modern thought is a disavowal of metaphysics, I sought to show in the first part of chapter 3 that much of what is called ‘the Enlightenment’ is precisely a metaphysics - in Aristotle’s terms, that which comes after physics (in this case Newton’s physics) and seeks to describe the basis upon which that physics works. Edwards offered a different metaphysics for the same physics - a different set of ontological and epistemological claims that could justify the same science. To this extent, his criticism of Enlightenment is not just a criticism of the then-nascent American social experiment - Jenson’s point - but a wider criticism of a whole worldview.

The term ‘postmodernity’ has been widely derided; it seems to me to have a certain strength. The recently-offered criticisms of modernity are immensely powerful, and theology (which of all academic disciplines should not find its security in the dominant ideas of the present age) should be able to recognise and perhaps even welcome that. However, what has not yet been offered is any viable alternative rationality, and in this sense the present condition is precisely ‘post-modern’ – after one thing, but not yet wedded to anything else.

The currently-popular response of embracing some form of relativism or fragmentation is, of course, intellectually naive: computers and (unfortunately) nuclear weapons still work,¹⁸ and books still teach, and the challenge faced by philosophers is to explain the rationalities that underlie such events, not to try to pretend that such events are illusions. Edwards offers an alternative rationality, one that may be more robust than modernity proved to be. And – my point – this is a rationality for all peoples, not just for his fellow Americans.

¹⁷ Chapter 1, section 1.2.

¹⁸ At least until the millennium bug strikes!

Thirdly, I have both assumed and argued throughout that Edwards is best understood as a theologian within the Reformed tradition, and here I deliberately say 'Reformed' rather than 'Puritan'. The latter term is notoriously hard to define, but Edwards' more philosophical and systematising interests make his theology more reminiscent of the continental orthodox tradition than of the English Puritan, if such a division may be made.¹⁹ I shall be arguing the importance of this recognition for Reformed theology later in this chapter, but for now the focus is on the study of Edwards. To study Edwards without reference to Locke has long been unacceptable; even the best and most explicitly theological studies of Edwards, however, have little or no mention of François Turretin and Petrus van Mastricht.²⁰

Indications of the value of a consideration of such thinkers can be found within this study. A comparison of Edwards with van Mastricht not only demonstrated the source for much of his thinking on the subject of divine glory, but also enabled the original features to be seen, which resulted in the thoroughly Trinitarian nature of Edwards' account being uncovered. Turretin has been used throughout to provide background, but was used particularly to give an awareness of the immediate background for the consideration of the form of Edwards' predestinarianism in chapter 4.²¹ The importance of such continental Reformed theologians for Edwards' mature thought, however, is best indicated by the closing pages of his *Catalogue*, the notebook where he kept records of books for which he was seeking. Pages 40-42

¹⁹ It could, I suspect, be argued that the reason for this is sociological: English Puritanism was a nonconformist movement, existing in opposition to (or at best uneasily within) the state church. This not only affected theological self-awareness, but also limited academic opportunities, and demanded that effort be put into the task of surviving. The evidence of this can be seen in the overwhelmingly practical and polemical bias of Puritan writings. This thesis would best be argued by an examination of those English Puritans who bear most comparison to Edwards stylistically - for example, John Owen - suggesting that they lived a proportion of their adult life under the Commonwealth, during which these conditions were removed. This might also explain the different nature of Scottish Reformed theology of the day, with which Edwards clearly felt affinities.

²⁰ Turretin is easier to study: an English translation has recently appeared (see Bibliography for details), and there were editions of his works produced into the last century. van Mastricht can only be found in folios bearing the marks of three centuries of use - or, more likely, neglect. Amy Plantinga Pauw makes this point in her Ph.D. Dissertation, *'The Supreme Harmony of All': Jonathan Edwards and the Trinity*.

²¹ I have had no cause to mention him, but J.F. Stapfer could be added to this list. The *Miscellanies* entries numbered in the early 1300s contain numerous long quotations from Stapfer's *Inst.Theol.Polem.* that show Edwards' reliance on this text in attempting to construct his proposed apologetics. (Johann Friedrich Stapfer (1708-1775) published his *Institutiones Theologiae Polemicæ universæ ordine scientifico dispositæ* in five volumes between 1743 and 1747. It went through at least four editions in the next few years).

contain lists of continental Reformed works, mostly recommended in Stapfer or Pfaffus,²² indicating that Edwards' reading was turning more and more in this direction as he sought to gather material for his proposed works.

Fourthly, I have had reason to mention the provisional nature of some of Edwards' writings, particularly the *Miscellanies* on several occasions in the course of my exposition.²³ There has been a widespread appreciation of the theological interest and value of Edwards' notebooks, which can only grow with their publication, but their character as notebooks has sometimes been forgotten. A quotation from a *Miscellanies* entry is not sufficient to prove any point other than the trivial one that Edwards was thinking about such-and-such an idea at a particular time.²⁴ In particular, many of the entries are contradicted by later discussions. My long series of expositions in chapter 2 of this thesis should serve to illustrate this point, by showing how a question was played with, how various answers were tried, explored, refined and discarded until Edwards was ready to state a position in the published *End of Creation*.

A similar point may be made with respect to the sermons, a point I indicated in the course of my discussion of the imprecatory sermons in chapter 5.²⁵ Whilst these are more careful and more polished, being set before the congregation week by week, with the exception of those texts Edwards published himself during his lifetime, we cannot assume that a particular sermon gives a whole, or even what Edwards would regard as a satisfactory, treatment of a subject. As anyone who has sustained a preaching ministry for even a few months will know, the weekly deadlines mean that sermons do not always receive the preacher's best, or most considered, thoughts.

²² For Stapfer see n.21 above. 'Pfaffus' is mentioned only as the author of a 'Body of Divinity'; I assume Christoph M. Pfaff is meant, a prolific Lutheran author of the early eighteenth century who (amongst other works) wrote a number of books seeking to unite the Reformed and Lutheran churches. If this is the case, I have not been able to discover a text which might be described as a 'Body of Divinity', however.

²³ The long discussion in chapter 2 (section 2.2, pp.44-52) is the primary evidence in my thesis of this point, but see also my comments on Christology in chapter 4, pp.134-135.

²⁴ One illustration: *Miscellanies* 595 (unpublished) ends with the comment '(these things about baptism doubtfull)'. This appears to be a later addition to the text, but does demonstrate that Edwards simply changed his mind on occasion about things that he had written in his notebooks.

Edwards' is a vast corpus, but respect must be paid to the different types of writing within it, or we risk taking an idea that he merely toyed with for a few days before rejecting as a settled position. An example of this sort of fault can be found even in the best study: Jenson, in discussing Christology, makes much of a very radical form of the *communicatio idiomatum* that he finds in Edwards' texts. This conclusion is reached by referring to a series of texts - almost every one of which could be contradicted by a similar text from Edwards' notebooks.²⁶

Fifthly, and finally within this section, I believe my thesis illuminates the contradiction that is often found by students of Edwards' theology. Most theologians who have studied Edwards would broadly agree - as would I - with the following opinions of Douglas Elwood:

...as the foundation of goodness in God, Edwards ... stressed absolute beauty ... God is sovereign because he is good, not good because he is sovereign ... God is not so much power-itself as he is love-itself. In creating a world he is moved not by a lust for power but by the power of love.²⁷

But Edwards could, and did, preach passages such as the following:

The bow of God's wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and justice bends the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation at all, that keeps the arrow one moment from being made drunk with your blood...²⁸

²⁵ I also made this point a number of times in discussing the *History of the Work of Redemption* in the latter part of chapter 3.

²⁶ Jenson, *op.cit.* pp.115-118. Jenson quotes Edwards as speaking of 'the man' Christ Jesus creating and upholding the world, points which are directly contradicted by some remarks Edwards makes in response to Isaac Watts' Christology in *Miscellanies* 1174 (not yet published, but the *Miscellaneous Observations Concerning the Deity of Christ* §§58-62 (BT2 pp.509-510) offer an adequate text). In the face of two competing sets of claims, it is difficult to make any assessment of the validity or otherwise of Jenson's position: Edwards may have held to the earlier positions that Jenson quotes, and the later comments in response to Watts may be a false move. Certainly, however, no assertion concerning Edwards' position on these points can be made with any confidence in the face of the competing evidence. It will be clear to the reader of chapter 4 of this thesis that my own Reformed presuppositions make me ill-disposed to take Jenson's point, however! Edwards recorded his intention to obtain 'A Dissertation on the Logos which Dr Watts mentions as a book that he himself was the author of in his *Glory of Christ God-man* p.70 & 81.' in his *Catalogue* (p.25); the lack of markings around this entry suggest that he never managed to procure the book.

²⁷ Elwood, Douglas J. *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* Columbia University Press, New York, 1960 p.30.

²⁸ 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God', 'Application' (BT2 p.9)

Perry Miller tried to rehabilitate Edwards by bracketing his theology *in toto*; the more recent fashion has been to bracket the imprecatory sermons,²⁹ to claim that these are not a major part of the corpus (true), not representative of much of it (also true) and so can be safely ignored (which of course does not follow).³⁰ Any complete account of Edwards' theology should illuminate and identify the disjunction that is clearly present here.³¹ This would perhaps be another fair criticism of Jenson's study: he notes that there is nothing unusual about Edwards' assertions of God's absolute sovereignty - rather, it is Edwards' understanding of the God who is sovereign that is determinative.³² This is certainly true, but once we have understood who the God who is sovereign is, that should drive us back to ask why there is nothing unusual about Edwards' assertions of God's sovereignty. If, as Jenson suggests later in the chapter, Edwards' account of predestination bears comparison with Barth's³³ - a comparison I have already indicated my agreement with - why is it simply impossible to imagine Barth preaching some of Edwards' sermons?

²⁹ Norman Fiering remarks on 'the efforts of some modern interpreters to make the doctrine of hell merely a footnote to Edwards's other speculations' *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1981 p.200.

³⁰ I am not sure I have ever seen this argument made explicitly, but the first two points are regularly made and then, with no further reason offered, these sermons are ignored. It is difficult to see what other reasoning may be operative. This tendency has become so marked that the author of one recent study on Edwards' doctrine of salvation argued that his logic allowed for a 'wider hope' without feeling any need to refer to the imprecatory texts. (Morimoto, *op.cit.* pp.62-68) As it happens, I agree with the point - but it surely cannot be made without a detailed discussion of texts that point so strongly in the opposite direction.

³¹ Robert Lowell's poem, 'Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts', illustrates that this is not just a problem perceived by the theological community. To extract some stanzas:

Poor country Berkeley at Yale,
you saw the world was soul,
the soul of God! The soul
of Sarah Pierrepont!

...

Then God's love shone in sun, moon and stars,
on earth, in the waters,
in the air, in the loose winds,
which used to greatly fix your mind.

...

You gave
her Pompey, a Negro slave,
and eleven children.

Yet people were spiders...

(From *For the Union Dead*, Faber and Faber, London, 1966 pp.40-44.)

³² *op.cit.* pp.101-102.

³³ *ibid.* p.106.

Jenson identifies what he sees as the flaw in Edwards' theology: the lack of ontological weight given to the word in all its forms. This, however, sheds no light on the recurrent problem of the imprecatory sermons, and so is ultimately unsatisfactory as a complete criticism, however useful it is in a variety of other areas. I have repeatedly referred to the 'flaw' in Edwards' theology; in crystallographic terms, a 'flaw' is a fault where well-arranged structures on either side fail to meet. On the one hand, Edwards holds to a Reformed and Puritan doctrine of perdition that makes sense on its own terms; on the other he reformulates doctrines of God and creation in the face of the growing Enlightenment challenge. But the two will not hold together - and my analysis in the previous chapter of his attempts 'to justify God's ways to man' in this area suggest strongly that he was aware that this join would not hold.

My thesis, I suggest, illuminates the nature of this flaw; it does not explain its origin. To explore this further, I will turn to an examination of Edwards' place in theological history, and what the foregoing may add to that.

6.4 *The History of Reformed Theology*

Space precludes the inclusion of an argument against the idea of the doctrine of predestination as the defining point of Reformed theology, but it is an idea that I am unhappy with. A less sweeping and, I think, more defensible suggestion is that one of the distinctive features of Reformed theologies is a particular, and broadly similar, view of predestination. Whilst I cannot argue this point fully in the present context, some pointers as to the direction the argument might move in can be given:

When Loraine Boettner wrote on the doctrine of the divine decrees in the early part of this century, he felt able to title his treatment *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*.³⁴ Barth responded sharply to this study,³⁵ but he responded because he felt that the Reformed doctrine was inadequate,³⁶ not because of any quarrel with the idea of presenting several centuries of Reformed thinking on this subject in such a monolithic way. More recent historical study has, of course, muddied the waters

³⁴ Presbyterian and Reformed, n.loc., 1968.

³⁵ C.D. II/2 p.36-38; 46-47.

somewhat. Two ongoing discussions in particular stand out: the recognition that federal Calvinism was something different from the thought of Calvin himself;³⁷ and a series of arguments concerning the nature of faith and the relationship between Christ and the decree that have usually been treated by the same authors, sometimes in a fairly heated manner, and can be summed up by the sobriquet the 'Calvin against the Calvinists' debate.³⁸ However, these do not prevent a distinctive, and still remarkably coherent, Reformed tradition stretching from Calvin through Dort to Warfield and Barth. I suggest that two features define this tradition: the attempt to use the doctrine of predestination to give assurance, and the shape given to expositions of the doctrine.

The latter point is an observation relating to the Remonstrance and the Synod of Dort. In virtually all Reformed theology, the doctrine of predestination is expounded in terms of the five points - whether the writer is defending them, attacking them or seeking to make modifications, still the questions asked by the Remonstrants define the shape in which the doctrine is expounded.³⁹

³⁶ '...it cannot be our present task simply to take one of the classical forms of the traditional doctrine and to present it as integrally as possible - as, in the case of the Calvinistic form, Loraine Boettner has recently attempted to do ...' *ibid.* p.13.

³⁷ The arguments as to whether federalism is merely a systematisation of ideas already present or latent in Calvin, or whether it is something new (perhaps learnt from Bullinger) that changes the system decisively, need not be addressed here. For various contributions see Baker, J. Wayne *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* Ohio University Press, Athens, 1980; Møller, Jens G. 'The Beginnings of Puritan Covenant Theology' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963) pp.46-67; Rolston, Holmes 'Responsible Man in Reformed Theology: Calvin versus the Westminster Confession' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (197) pp.129-156; McCoy, Charles S. 'Johannes Cocceius: Federal Theologian' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16 (1963) pp.352-370; Stoeber, W.K.B., 'A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven': *Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, 1978; Strehle, Stephen *Calvinism, Federalism and Scholasticism: A study of the Reformed Doctrine of Covenant* Peter Lang, Bern, 1988; von Rohr, John *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* The Scholars Press, Atlanta, 1986; Weir, David A., *The Origins of the Federal Theology in Sixteenth Century Reformation Thought* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990.

³⁸ Notable contributions are: Hall, Basil 'Calvin against the Calvinists' in *John Calvin: A Collection of Distinguished Essays* (ed. Duffield, G.) Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1966 pp.19-37; Helm, Paul *Calvin and the Calvinists* Banner of Truth, Edinburgh, 1982; Kendall, R.T. *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1978; Muller, Richard A. *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* Baker, Grand Rapids, 1986; Torrance, James B. 'Covenant or Contract? A Study of the Theological Background of Worship in Seventeenth Century Scotland' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23 (1970) pp.51-76.

³⁹ Evidence for this contention can be found in the works cited above, but consider also the standard lines of debate amongst Reformed theologians. Supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism are alike positions which accept the five points; even Amyraldianism was discussed in these terms: '...unquestionably the predominant design of [the Saumur theologians] was to restore what [they] firmly believed to be the teaching of Scripture, Calvin and the Dort Canons concerning the matter of

The former point relates to the most innovative of Calvin's contributions: there is nothing particularly original about his doctrine of predestination, but the use he gives it, of replacing sacramental theology as the grounds for Christian hope, is certainly original. In the medieval church the combination of efficacious sacraments and a doctrine of purgatory meant that theological reassurance was available for anyone disposed to question their salvation, or troubled by fears of hell. The Reformation removed the 'safety net' of purgatory – but in its Lutheran form at least retained the efficacy of the sacraments and (particularly) the proclamation of the Word. The Zwinglian version of Reformed theology, however, did away with this also, leaving no answer the terrible question 'but how can I know I am saved?' for religiously serious people. The Anabaptist response – assurance comes from my consciousness of having done the right things – was, of course, no assurance at all, and in any case rank Pelagianism; Calvin's alternative was to locate assurance in the promise of God, specifically election.⁴⁰

It is clear from Calvin's treatment that this is his purpose. Within the first paragraph on election in the 1559 *Institutes*, Calvin insists that '[w]e shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election...'.⁴¹ As the account moves on we read that 'Satan has no more grievous or dangerous temptation to dishearten believers than when he unsettles them with doubt about their election.' And again: '...the mind could not be infected with a more pestilential error than that which

predestination.' Armstrong, Brian G. *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth Century France* University of Wisconsin Press, London, 1969, p.142. Again, 'Amyraut himself often asserted that his position was the same as that of Dort.' Thomas, G. Michael *The Extent of the Atonement: A Dilemma for Reformed Theology from Calvin to the Concensus (1536-1675)* Paternoster, Carlisle, 1997.

⁴⁰ Given Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments – the faithful fulfilment of God's promise by His Spirit – a new, and more satisfying, version of sacramental assurance was theologically available to him. Whilst his introductory statements concerning the Lord's Supper suggest that this was at least in his mind (*Inst.* IV.17.1), he offers alternative loci for assurance (particularly election), and does not particularly stress this one. In response to Lutheran polemic, later Reformed theologians tended to adopt a Zwinglian view of sacrament where this possibility was not open, and so assurance remained linked to election.

⁴¹ *Inst.* III.21.1.

overwhelms and unsettles the conscience from its peace and tranquility towards God.'⁴²

However, when Calvin introduces the idea of temporary faith in his discussion of reprobation, this purpose fails.⁴³ Those with 'temporary faith', according to Calvin, may have 'signs of a call that are similar to those of the elect' but lack 'the sure establishment of election.'⁴⁴ In this case, however, the question is surely still open: how can worried believers know whether what they experience is a 'sure establishment' or merely 'signs ... that are similar'? I will return to this question.

The tradition that followed Calvin was thus faced with an important pastoral question. Whatever may be thought of the central thesis of R.T. Kendall's *Calvin and English Calvinism*, his evidence surely demonstrates his contention that 'the fundamental concern in the theology of Perkins and his followers centres on the question, How can one know he is elect and not reprobate?'⁴⁵ The Puritan tradition was perhaps more devoted to explicitly practical theology than continental Reformed theology, but the point may also be found there:⁴⁶ 'The uses of this doctrine are many and outstanding in the Church of Christ. But these uses reach their full effectiveness, only when the elect are made surer of their election.'⁴⁷ Turretin also insists on absolute assurance of predestination.⁴⁸

⁴² Both from *Inst.* III.24.4.

⁴³ *Inst.* III.24.7-9.

⁴⁴ Both III.24.7.

⁴⁵ *op.cit.* p.1.

⁴⁶ On this see Wallace, Dewey D. *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology 1525-1695*, University of North Carolina Studies in Religion, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1982. Wallace identifies a 'Reformed tradition' of predestinarian teaching from the earliest days of the Reformation, and highlights the desire to give 'comfort and assurance' as one of the distinctives of this tradition. As he traces through the Anglophone developing tradition, he indicates that this distinctive grows in importance - see, for example, his suggestion that Elizabethan alterations in the Articles of Religion were prompted by 'the growing Reformed use of predestination for providing assurance.' (pp.31-32). Again, Beeke, Joel R., *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism, and the Dutch Second Reformation*, American University Studies Series VII: Theology and Religion Vol.89, Peter Lang, New York, 1991 begins with the assertion 'one of the great struggles of the theologian and pastor of the post-Reformation churches lay within the area of personal assurance of faith...'

⁴⁷ Leiden Synopsis XXIV, 41-42, quoted by Heppe p.178.

⁴⁸ *Inst.Elenc.Theol.* IV.13 - see the statement of the question, and particularly §§13,22 and 27 - this latter asserting 'this certainty is necessary...'

Finally, one may comment that the great concern in Barth's presentation of the doctrine of election is that it should be gospel. Not only is this clear from Barth's first comments on election, as he discusses the orientation of the doctrine, it is also abundantly clear from the discussion of rejection, which Barth defines as an attempt by a human person to live as if he or she were not the elect God, in the face of God's decision that he or she is elected. The sense that assurance lies here is very clear in Barth's exposition.⁴⁹

Thus there are continuities of purpose and of contour throughout the history of Reformed Orthodoxy, if not a precise continuity of theological content. To some extent, these continuities precede the period usually considered as 'Orthodoxy' – in Calvin, for instance – and also extend beyond it – in Warfield's defence of the five points,⁵⁰ or Barth's use of election to give assurance to the believer. With this (very sketchy!) background in place, it is time to return to Edwards.

There is, I have argued, a broadly coherent tradition of Reformed theology in the area of predestination. There is also, it seems, now a broad agreement that this tradition does not work. Criticisms are rife within the tradition, whether the complaints come from the Remonstrants, Amyraut, Eighteenth century evangelicals or Nineteenth century liberals. But the welcome given to Barth's recasting of the doctrine suggests that these isolated attacks have been replaced by a near-universal rejection of this way of formulating the doctrine, amongst mainstream theologians at any rate. Whilst particular groups still defend five-point Calvinism, there is wide agreement that what Boettner called 'The' Reformed doctrine of predestination is unsatisfactory. Where there is less agreement is in the nature of the problem.

Barth, and a series of scholars broadly following his critique, have focused on Christological issues, claiming that the Decree ousts Christ from His rightful place as

⁴⁹ And made all the more so if alternative loci are considered. Baptism, for example, is ethical response to the prior assurance of God's election, not a ground for assurance in itself.

⁵⁰ Warfield, B.B. *Works* (in ten volumes) Baker, Grand Rapids, 1981. One might almost say *passim* on this point, but see particularly 'Predestination' in vol.II, *Biblical Doctrines* pp.3-67; 'Calvinism' in vol.V *Calvin and Calvinism* pp.353-369; and vol. VI, *The Westminster Assembly and its Work*, particularly pp.3-151. This latter makes the point that it is Westminster Calvinism more than that of Dort which Warfield defends - but the Westminster Divines held as firmly to the five points as any Anti-Remonstrant.

the index of all God's acts. Barth made this criticism of Calvin, as well as the tradition that followed him; later scholarship has tended to revise this judgement by suggesting that Calvin was appropriately Christological, but the tradition went wrong soon after – Beza often being blamed.⁵¹ Edwards is interesting in this regard: there is little doubt that his doctrine of election is appropriately Christological, and yet he can – fairly, in the sense that it is true to sermons that he preached and never disowned – be held up as an example of this tradition at its worst. It may be that a consideration of Edwards will shed theological light on a – perhaps the – central question that has been asked of the Reformed tradition of theology.

Although it has been done before, it will be instructive to review a response to this charge as levelled against Calvin:⁵²

Whilst the final edition of the *Institutes* must be considered the basic source for Calvin's theology, the development of his treatment of election is instructive – through the various editions of the *Institutes* it grows in importance and, crucially, moves around.⁵³ The vital change in 1559 is to separate predestination from providence and to place it squarely under the work of the Spirit in applying Christ's benefits. So, as I have noted already, the end of Book III, 'The way we receive the grace of Christ' is the locus for predestination, in contrast to the medieval tradition, which made predestination a special case of providence, or Augustine and Bucer, who had placed the doctrine under ecclesiology.

⁵¹ As I have indicated already in this thesis, the less-careful form of the criticism made by some scholars following Barth, that in the tradition the doctrine of predestination was not Christological at all, is not supported by the evidence. A comment of Heppe's that I have already quoted makes this point sufficiently well to warrant repetition: '*Of course* the person of Christ is the foundation of election. To a certain extent he is the sole object of it...' (p.168; my italics).

⁵² Many studies of Calvin's understanding of predestination have appeared - indeed, a disproportionate number, related to the importance of the doctrine in his own theology, if not in relation to that of those who followed him. Those I have found most instructive include: Muller, *op.cit.*; Niesel, Wilhelm *The Theology of Calvin* (tr. Harold Knight) Lutterworth Library vol. XLVIII, Lutterworth Press, London, 1956; Reid, J.K.S. 'The Office of Christ in Predestination' *SJT* 1(1948) pp.5-19 & 166-183; Wendel, F. *Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought* (tr. Philip Mairet) The Fontana Library of Theology and Philosophy, Collins, London, 1963. In addition, Barth's interactions with any scholar in history are instructive, and he carries out a long and rich (if slightly misconstrued, in my opinion) dialogue with Calvin throughout *C.D.* II/2.

⁵³ See Wendel, *op.cit.* pp.263ff. For an instructive survey covering not just the *Institutes*, but other writings such as the *French Catechism* of 1537.

It is important at this point that the movement of later Reformed orthodoxy is not read back into Calvin. This doctrine is not, for Calvin, the first word concerning humanity in light of which all other words must be understood. Perhaps it should be – Barth certainly felt so⁵⁴ – but to give the doctrine a place different from the one Calvin assigns and then to criticise him because it fails to fulfil that role is hardly a fair, let alone an appropriately generous, way to do theology. Barth suggests a *via media* – that, for Calvin, ‘election was a final (and therefore a first) word on the whole reality of the Christian life, the word which tells us that the existence and the continuance and the future of that life are wholly and utterly of the free grace of God.’⁵⁵

The first part of this formulation is acceptable, but dangerous. In reading Calvin, as compared to later Reformed dogmatics, I would want to insist on the radical difference between ‘a final (and therefore a first) word’ and a first (and therefore a final) word. For Calvin, election is the first word spoken concerning the Christian life, but it is this *a posteriori* – the position of election at the *end* of Book III cannot be stressed too strongly. If election is made the *a priori* basis for a doctrine of salvation, the oft-lamented hardening of the doctrine of predestination that we see historically is almost inevitable. By this placement, Calvin avoids teaching a limited atonement,⁵⁶ is able to insist that assurance is found in Christ, not in the Decree, and generally maintains the fluidity of his treatment, preserving both a strongly evangelical and universalising appeal to all to repent and believe, and a doctrine of God that insists on His sovereignty and priority. This balance is necessary in any account of the doctrine which will offer assurance to the believer – the ‘all’ of the

⁵⁴ C.D. II/2 p.86.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ This ‘grim doctrine’ does indeed ‘logically follow’ from the ‘conception of predestination’ that Barth claims Calvin taught – see C.D. IV/1 p.57 – but, as will become clear, I believe Barth mis-read Calvin at this point in several important particulars. Sometimes it is argued that Calvin does in fact teach limited atonement (e.g. Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists op.cit.* pp.13-23); these arguments, if examined carefully, tend to turn on a logical deduction: Calvin taught irresistible, personal election, and did not teach universal salvation, so he must have taught a limited atonement. This argument is not watertight logically (it requires an unstated premise that the atonement is the only efficient cause of salvation), but even if it were, showing that a position may be deduced from someone’s theology is some distance from showing that that theologian realised this and accepted the position. There is no textual evidence that Calvin taught a limited atonement and so he did not. The most other arguments may show is that he was illogical in not doing this. Kendall’s criticisms on this point are useful, although his alternative position (that the atonement was unlimited, but the heavenly intercession of Christ is limited to the elect) is less convincing. *op.cit.* p.17.

promises is vital (as Calvin recognises⁵⁷) to assure me that I am among the elect, and the sovereignty of God is vital to assure me that my faith rests on His constancy, not my weakness.

The standard criticism of Calvin concerns the ‘hidden decree’; if this stands, then there is no assurance in Calvin’s account – election and rejection are alike secret decisions of God, and I cannot know which applies to me. Reid makes this charge forcefully, with the help of a ‘chance phrase’ in III.22.1: ‘...election precedes grace. If this is true, then one’s worst forebodings are fulfilled. The God and Father of Jesus Christ is a God of grace. Who, then, is this God who determines men’s election before grace becomes operative?’⁵⁸ Certainly, as Reid contends, the idea that election belongs to the eternal, secret, absolute will of God is a *Leitmotiv* in Calvin’s account; the question remains, however, whether this eternal, secret and absolute will can be revealed. The placing of the doctrine under the work of Christ, and the Christological focus of Calvin’s understanding of revelation, suggest that this may be the case. Further, if, as I have argued, Calvin’s aim in treating election is to give assurance to believers, then, making the assumption that he was not blind to the most glaring contradictions in his own theology, it seems likely that this will is indeed revealed.

All revelation, for Calvin, is revelation of the Word, Jesus Christ, who is with God and is God (I.13.7, echoing John 1). Thus revelation is God revealing Himself by means of Himself. ‘For this purpose the Father laid up with his only-begotten Son *all that he had* to reveal himself in Christ so that Christ ... might express the true image of his glory.’ (III.2.1; my emphasis). There is nothing of God that is not in Jesus Christ.⁵⁹ This gives content and force to Calvin’s repeated insistence that we look to Christ for assurance of our election (III.24.5): ‘If we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if

⁵⁷ ‘But why does he say “all”? It is that the consciences of the godly may rest more secure...’ III.24.17.

⁵⁸ Reid, *art.cit.* p.12. Reid misreads Calvin at this point; the phrase ‘election precedes grace’ occurs as part of a rhetorical question, and Calvin’s whole intention is to deny the possibility that this might be true, as the context makes clear. See *Inst.* III.21.1.

⁵⁹ Calvin’s statement (at least) of the *extra calvinisticum* is clear in asserting that there is nothing of the Son that is not incarnate, although the Son cannot be limited to the humanity of the incarnation. See *Inst.* II.13.4.

we conceive of him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror where we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election’.

Election, for Calvin, is in Christ, and known only in Christ. This enables Jacobs to assert that, for Calvin, ‘Christ and election belong to one another inextricably - as inseparable as water and a fountain; Christ, correctly understood, is the “index”: Christ is election itself.’⁶⁰ But Calvin goes further than this - in III.22.7, Christ is called the *auctor electionis*. *Auctor* (Lewis and Scott’s *Dictionary* offers ‘creator’, ‘maker’ and ‘founder’, as well as ‘author’) implies that Christ for Calvin is something more than the decree, not less, as Reid and Barth imply. In this same section Christ is represented as claiming, with the Father, ‘the right to choose’. Christ is the source of the decree, not just its channel. The One who elects elects Himself to be the means by which others are elected. Calvin does not spell this out, and so perhaps leaves himself open to misunderstanding, but the conception is nevertheless there.

Given this, I would contend that the standard criticism of Calvin’s account, of the concept of hiddenness, is unfair. Calvin is straining hard to offer as clear a view as he is able of the certainty of perseverance and final salvation for all who have come to Christ in faith. Having said this, there are two further areas where I believe there are weaknesses, and damaging ones, in the account of predestination Calvin offers. The two locations are the doctrine of eternity, and the decree of reprobation.

Firstly, the related issues of the work of the Spirit and the nature of eternity: Calvin, almost in passing, offers an adequate definition of eternity as all things being present to God (III.21.5), but then appears to treat election as something that happened before all time and is fixed, rather than offering a dynamic, pneumatological account of something that happens in time because it is happening in eternity. Any conception like this is in grave danger of lapsing into simple fatalism, as humanity is reduced to a puppet theatre, playing out scenes written long before. Certainly, Calvin does not make so gross an error, but perhaps he does not guard sufficiently against it either in these passages – his account of fallen human freedom in II.2-5 is far more careful.

⁶⁰ quoted in Muller, *op.cit.* p.35.

Secondly, the decree that is genuinely Christless and hidden in Calvin's account is the decree of reprobation. The point at which he appears to engage in special pleading in his attempt to give assurance to believers is when he speaks of 'temporary faith' (III.24.7-9). Those with this 'temporary faith', according to Calvin, 'never cleaved to Christ with the heartfelt trust in which the certainty of election has, I say, been established for us.' They may indeed 'have signs of a call that are similar to those of the elect,' but lack 'the sure establishment of election.' (III.24.7) But of course such phrases achieve the very opposite of their intention, raising the spectre that there is something that masquerades as true faith, but is not. How can any believer know whether he or she feels a 'sure establishment' or whether it is merely 'signs of a call similar to those of the elect'? The invitation for years of morbid introspection by later believers is surely here - at this point, with these phrases in my ears, that I cannot be sure of my own salvation. There is no assurance, and so the doctrine fails in its purpose. The weakness in Calvin's account of predestination is that the doctrine of reprobation is detached, Christless, hidden in the unsearchable purposes of God. As such it bears no comparison with the doctrine of election, but remains something less than a Christian doctrine. There is, in Calvin's account, a fundamental difference between election and reprobation. *Contra* Barth, Calvin's failure is not that he teaches a symmetrical double decree (Barth speaks of 'the classical doctrine with its opposing categories of "elect" and "reprobate".'⁶¹), but that he has almost no room for the doctrine of reprobation in his account.

This difference, this asymmetry, is 'a very amiable fault'; it gives insight into Calvin the pastor, whose heart and mind were full of the glories of God's gift of salvation in Christ - so different from the caricature so often painted. Calvin's doctrine fails not because the 'No' is equal to the 'Yes', as Barth would have it, but because the 'No' does not really enter his thinking. It is a logical result of the 'Yes', and necessary for the 'Yes' truly to be 'Yes', but whereas election is bound up in his theology, it is the very fact that he is seemingly not interested in reprobation, that he has not brought it within the Trinitarian scope of his system, that makes it such a weak point. Amiable or not, it was a disastrous fault, however, because the failure to give the assurance Calvin longed to give is here, and so here is the root of all the long history of the

⁶¹ C.D. II/2 p.326.

sylogismus practicus. Calvin's account, then, is directed towards displaying the glories of God's grace clearly and only in the face of Jesus Christ, but remains possessed of an 'Achilles heel' which, on the witness of history, was indeed the point at which the fatal blow was struck.

So, I suggest that the problem in Calvin is to do with his doctrine of reprobation, rather than his doctrine of election, or predestination in general. If this is correct, then an interesting comparison is available: I have devoted my thesis to arguing that the same is true of Edwards. This suggests an interesting line of enquiry:

Barth's doctrine of election in *C.D.* II/2 has perhaps excited more interest than any other area of the *Dogmatics*, and been widely praised. However, the very inventiveness of Barth's contribution makes it more difficult to decide what it is that is decisive in making this account theologically satisfying in a way that the earlier Reformed tradition was not - particularly as it has not, perhaps, been sufficiently recognised that, for all its novelty, this remains a contribution from within Reformed theology.⁶² My discussion of Calvin and Edwards suggests that the earlier lack was in the area of reprobation, rather than election, and a glance at Barth suggests that this may well be key: one of his most original moves was to offer a Christologically determined doctrine of reprobation.

For the Reformed tradition, to be reprobate was, by definition, to be separated from Christ. This point was made towards the end of chapter 4, but bears reiteration. The elect were in Christ, and so whatever might happen in the way of temporary backsliding, they remained secure. The reprobate were separated from Christ by 'a great gulf fixed', and so any goodness, religious practice, or apparent faith on their part was worthless. This is true of Calvin, and true of Edwards. It is not true of Barth.

⁶² A glance at the second index, of names, demonstrates this most effectively, enabling not only a tracing of the detailed running debate with Calvin, but also the regular discussions of the various Reformed Symbols, seven references to Cocceius, eight to Polanus, five to van Mastricht, six to Wollebius' brief treatment, and so on. Bruce McCormack's recent magisterial study of the development of Barth's theology makes this point powerfully. He argues that Barth's first attempt to write a theology text, the 'Gottingen Dogmatics', was conceived after the medieval model of the 'Sentence Commentary', with Heppe's synopsis of the Reformed tradition taking the place of Peter

In discussing Barth's understanding of election, the appropriate point to begin is again in considering the placement of the doctrine - Barth, with his encyclopedic knowledge of theological history, believes himself to be the first person to place election as part of the doctrine of God.⁶³ The implications of this are immense: '[i]t is indissolubly part of the very being and essence of God that he elects. This cannot be put too strongly. The Christian God is one who elects. To be the Christian God *is* to be the one who elects, chooses, predestines.'⁶⁴ These last words illuminate a second theme: that predestination is election. Barth is emphatic in his rejection of double predestination.⁶⁵ There is no balance, no equivalence, the 'No' must be heard for the 'Yes' to be heard, but this 'No' has its existence only as part of the 'Yes' of God. God is free, but He is free to love.

Following his introduction to the doctrine, Barth rejects the standard temptation of asking about the election of an individual first. He treats first the election of Christ, then the elect community, and only once these are in place will he address the question of the individual. Christ is both the electing God and the elected man. Jacobs' words are, in the light of this section, far more true of Barth than of Calvin - Christ is the Decree. Given this, the decree for humanity is only to life, and knowledge of the decree is unambiguous gospel. Christ is the decree, however, and that includes the decree of rejection - Christ is the rejected one - God chooses for Himself the suffering, death and rejection that are the inevitable concomitant of the decree of life - the 'Yes' has a 'No' swallowed up in it, but nevertheless there - the light of God's grace casts a shadow; but this 'No', this shadow, are Christ's alone.⁶⁶

The elect community mirrors this dual role – the one community, consisting of both Israel and the Church, is both the passing form of the community that resists God's

Lombard. McCormack, Bruce *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development 1909-1936*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997 pp.329-350.

⁶³ C.D. II/2 p.76.

⁶⁴ Gunton, C.E. 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Election as Part of his Doctrine of God' *Journal of Theological Studies* (new series) 25 (1974) pp.381-392; p.381.

⁶⁵ At least as the phrase was traditionally understood. Barth, as I shall argue, teaches a double decree far more effectively than the tradition in his insistence that Jesus Christ is both the Elect and the Rejected one.

⁶⁶ C.D. II/2 pp.162-168.

election and the coming form of the community that witnesses to its election. The one reveals God's judgement, the other God's mercy - but both are part of the one elect community. Barth's point here is made forcefully by his consideration of Pontius Pilate:⁶⁷ in Pilate, the gentiles join with the Jews in bringing the fulfilment of Israel's hope - 'Thus the death of Jesus unites what was divided, the elected and rejected.'⁶⁸ We see the story of Jesus Christ in the story of the elect community.

After this, Barth is prepared to turn to the election of the individual.⁶⁹ Each human person wills his or her own rejection by God; but God wills his or her election. Jesus Christ bears all rejection, so there is no possibility of living in the rejection that we will for ourselves. The only possibility is to live as the elect of God, to live as people loved by God.

Nevertheless, there are those who try to live in the impossible way, and they are the 'rejected'; Barth's crowning example is the long and rich section on Judas.⁷⁰ Fundamentally, as the actions of giving bread and wine and washing feet show, Jesus was for Judas, although Judas was against Jesus. The outcome of this is not revealed: we cannot conceive that Judas' choice will eventually be determinative, but neither can we presume on the grace of God. We can only hope.

Here, then, is a gloriously evangelical asymmetry - 'death is swallowed up in victory'. But for this to be truly gospel, the reality of death must be preserved. Not because death has any rights, but because God owes nothing to any person, and so we must not reach a place where we think we can presume on His grace. If we do so, it ceases to be grace and we cease to preach the gospel of grace. The question, then, turns on how Barth maintains the 'impossible possibility', how he avoids the necessity, if not the possibility, of universal salvation.

The first point to make is that those critics who try to make Barth fit the standard Reformed structure of alternatives, where the only possible positions are Calvinism,

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.229.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.* pp.306-506.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* pp.458-506.

Arminianism or universalism, are simply missing the point.⁷¹ Barth regularly and explicitly denies each of these. All people are elected; God's choice is sovereign; hell remains a possibility. The best current solution⁷² seems to centre on the concept of eternity in Barth's theology. If election is something happening to time, not something that has happened before time, then the problem is lessened considerably. However this serves only to replace a temporal priority with a logical one, which is undoubtedly an improvement, but perhaps not a full solution. My own suspicion, although in the absence of any serious work it remains little more than that, is that further illumination must be sought in Barth's theodicy - it is, after all, ultimately the inevitability of the 'shadow' that causes him to first speak of the decree of rejection.⁷³

The very fact that Barth's doctrine has been seen as dangerously close to universalism is, of course, a point in its favour - the question for Christian theology in the light of what God has done in Christ must surely be how this can fail to affect any given human being, how anyone can fail to be saved. Thus the radical asymmetry Barth gives to the doctrine of individual election by means of his symmetrical doctrine of the predestination of Christ is entirely appropriate, and indeed necessary for *evangelical* theology. What I hope is clear, however, is the way Barth succeeds in offering a theology that is genuinely gospel - good news - by giving Christological content to perdition. To sum up in an epigram: Barth succeeds where Calvin fails because Barth had a doctrine of reprobation, where Calvin did not.

What has all this to do with my study on Edwards? I have suggested in the course of this study that Edwards' non-Christological doctrine of reprobation was incoherent, because of his doctrine of creation. Edwards has a much more Trinitarian account of the being of the world than the tradition in general,⁷⁴ and so even those who are reprobate, in that they are created beings, must have some connection to Christ and

⁷¹ Bettis, J.D. 'Is Karl Barth a Universalist?' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 20 (1967) pp.423-436 suggests both Brunner and Berkouwer use this structure.

⁷² so Bettis, *ibid.*; Colwell, J.E. *Actuality and Provisionality: Eternity and Election in the Thought of Karl Barth* Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 1989.

⁷³ *C.D.* II/2 pp.169-175.

⁷⁴ This criticism will even stand for Calvin, whose doctrine of creation in Book 1 of the *Institutes* lacks the careful Christological and pneumatological shaping that characterises so much else in the work. See Gunton, Colin E. *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998 pp.152-153.

the Spirit. The earlier Reformed doctrine was coherent in its own terms - although it failed in its purpose of providing assurance - but, we may ask, were those terms satisfactory? It was not just a removal of Christ from the being of the reprobate, but a prior removal of Christ from the being of the created world that was the problem. The Spirit, too, becomes an ecclesial reality, no longer in any theologically relevant sense the 'Lord and Giver of Life'.⁷⁵

Returning briefly to the tradition, this failure may have something to do with the prevalence of the infralapsarian position. Under this understanding, creation and fall are potentially part of a different order from redemption, and at best a prior, and opaque, part of the same order. *Homo was creatus et lapsus* - and this by the decree of God. Our knowledge of God's character and purposes, however, begin only at this point. In the supralapsarian scheme, creation was the first event in the gospel narrative; for the infralapsarian, it is a different story. Given this, God's showing of Himself to be Father, Son and Spirit in the gospel story could possibly fail to be determinative for the act of creation, according to an infralapsarian theology.

Whether for this reason or others, it is clear that the tradition was not thoroughly Trinitarian in its construction of the doctrine of creation, and so created, fallen humanity could be what it is without reference to the Son and Spirit - and so reprobation and perdition could be constructed as Christless, Spiritless doctrines. This is, as I have said, coherent in its own terms - but in Christian terms it is inadequate. As Edwards saw and argued, the God who creates is Father, Son and Spirit, and so no creaturely reality can be Christless and Spiritless. Edwards' embracing of a Trinitarian ontology was a necessary correction to the tradition. However, Edwards failed to make the second correction which this move made necessary, that of recognising that in speaking of human perdition, as much as in speaking of human salvation, we can only speak in Christological and pneumatological terms.

⁷⁵ So, for instance, Wollebius' doctrine of creation is an exposition of the six days, with the only reference to the Holy Spirit coming in an aside concerning the Incarnation. See Beardslee's translation in *Reformed Dogmatics* pp.54-58. It may not be too fanciful to trace from this the narrowing of the

I have argued that the failure of the Reformed doctrine of predestination was its failure to be a Christian doctrine - *i.e.* a doctrine built and based on the gospel story, and so refusing to speak of God's agency without speaking of God's Son and God's Spirit. I have further suggested that this relates to a deeper failure within the Reformed tradition, a failure to construct the doctrine of creation Christologically and pneumatologically. Edwards, precisely because he goes half-way towards rectifying these failures, demonstrates these theological connections with great clarity. This, I suggest, is the most important result of my thesis.

The first heresiarch in the Christian tradition was Marcion, whose particular ministry to the church (in common with all the heresiarchs) was to expose the dangers that constantly face Christian theologians in a particular area. The tradition, in speaking of the Creator God and the God who redeems by different names and with different grammar, was dangerously close to the intellectual territory that bears Marcion's name. Certainly, when we read in Perkins the suggestion that Adam fulfils the same role for the reprobate as Christ does for the elect,⁷⁶ we must disagree most strongly: this may be a sophisticated form of Marcionism, but sophistication is not enough to rescue a doctrine from the anathemas.

6.5 Theologia Reformata et Semper Reformanda

My final comment is once again about Reformed theology, and begins in some semi-autobiographical reflection: one of the reasons why I, as an English Baptist minister, became interested in Edwards was his effect on my own denomination. In the 1780s, the Evangelical Revival was in danger of bypassing English Baptist life altogether. The General (*i.e.* Arminian) Baptists had fallen into Unitarianism and Deism, and were no longer a Christian denomination in any meaningful sense. The Particular (*i.e.* Calvinist) Baptists were held captive by a hypercalvinist 'orthodoxy', usually considered to stem from the writings of John Gill and John Brine.⁷⁷ This

doctrine of the Spirit that has been one of the chief ironies of the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements.

⁷⁶ Perkins speaks of God loving the elect 'in Christ with an actual love' and hating the reprobate 'in Adam with an actual hatred'. This is in connection with the creation of humanity, so we must conclude that some ontology is intended. Perkins, William 'An Exposition of the Symbol' in *Works* vol.I p.238.

⁷⁷ On both Gill and Brine see Brown, Raymond *The English Baptists of the Eighteenth Century* The Baptist Historical Society, London, 1986 pp.72-76. George Ella has defended Gill from the charge of hypercalvinism in a recent article, which is also valuable for extensive bibliographical notes.

hypercalvinism was distinguished by the argument that, since the reprobate could not respond to the gospel invitation, it was inappropriate to preach in an invitational manner. One could speak of Christ's salvation, but not exhort sinners to repent and believe. Unsurprisingly, under the influence of such 'theology', the denomination was in a parlous state. The escape from this came through the publication in 1785 of Andrew Fuller's *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*, expressing an evangelical Calvinist theology that had taken root amongst a group of ministers in Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. Fuller based his arguments upon a close reading of Jonathan Edwards, particularly the *Freedom of the Will*.⁷⁸

Fullerism, as this transplanted Edwardsean Calvinism became known, led to a revitalisation of the denomination and the founding (by Fuller, William Carey and others) of the modern Protestant missionary movement in 1792, still my denomination's greatest gift to the Church Universal. Guided by Edwards' writings, the Baptists developed an evangelistically minded, modern, confident and relevant orthodox Calvinist theology, which came to fullest flower in the ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the 'Prince of Preachers'. Amongst many other works, Spurgeon founded a college for the training of pastors, and it was as a student at Spurgeon's College that I was first introduced to the writings of Jonathan Edwards.

There is more to the story than that, however: under the guidance of my tutors at that college, I began to discover what Edwards taught Fuller two centuries before - that a confident, relevant, evangelistic, Reformed theology was both possible and attractive. It was reading Barth rather than Edwards that first opened my eyes to this, but the point is the same. Such Reformed and reforming theology has informed my thought

Hypercalvinism was rife in Baptist circles; whether Gill was the source or not is not a question that does not need dealing with here. Ella, George M. 'John Gill and the Charge of Hyper-Calvinism' *Baptist Quarterly* XXXVI (1995) pp.160-177. Interestingly, there is evidence that Edwards had read Brine and, probably, Gill. *Miscellanies* entry 1357 contains material reproduced from Brine's writings concerning defects in philosophical morality, and Edwards' *Catalogue* contains two references to Gill. On p.17, he has copied out a report from the *Boston Gazette* of December 27, 1748, concerning an honorary D.D. awarded to Gill by the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, and mentioning his *Exposition of the New Testament*. A page later, Edwards has written 'Mr Gill on the 5 points in four volumes in octavo of which Mr Prince and Mr Foxcroft (? second name unclear) [supply 'spoke'] when I was in Boston.' Both entries are marked by a vertical line through the middle, and a large 'X' at the beginning, suggesting that Edwards had obtained the books.

and my preaching ever since, and I hold the tradition that bears the name in high honour. But something, it seems to me, has gone badly wrong:

In England at least, the title 'Reformed' often refers to a theology and church praxis that apparently lacks confidence, relevance, and intellectual rigor: the (increasingly) desperate attempt to hold to a mythical golden age of theology and polity defined by forcing figures as diverse as Owen and Baxter into a theological bed of Procrustes. The Reformed tradition of theology is a noble one, and at its noblest when, as with Edwards or Barth, it is confident enough to welcome what is new, test it by the one canon of the gospel, and accept and hold on to whatever may be found useful or interesting. Edwards rewrote Reformed theology because he found truth in the best secular philosophy - Locke - and science - Newton - of his day, and because he saw new things happening in the churches and was prepared to sift them and welcome the good. If a Reformed church must always be being reformed, as the noble slogan insists, then a Reformed theology must also always be open to the new thing that the Lord is doing. This thesis has been an attempt to honour a great Reformed theologian in the way that I believe Edwards would have wanted to be honoured: not by pretending that he had all things right, but by holding up the 'light and truth' that the Lord is still 'breaking forth from His Word' and seeking, in humble dependence on God's Spirit, to be ever more faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Because only thus will God be glorified.

Soli Deo Gloria!

Finis.

⁷⁸ For details of Edwards' influence on Fuller see Clipsham, E.F. 'Andrew Fuller and Fullerism: A Study in Evangelical Calvinism' *Baptist Quarterly* XX (1963-64) pp.99-114, 146-154, 214-225 & 268-276. Edwards' influence is particularly discussed on pp.110-113.

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